

Doctoral (PhD) dissertation

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**A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF POLITICAL DISCOURSE
ON REGIONAL INTEGRATION
IN EUROPE AND LATIN AMERICA**

The Case of the Pacific Alliance and the Visegrad Group

Doctoral (PhD) dissertation

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1. CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Rationale

Radical political discourses have gained strength through some of the most important social challenges nowadays, pandemic, migration, security, and social inequality, among others. This has resulted in a global phenomenon of fragmentation and decline of regional powers. In a contrasting process, different nations have joint forces to prevent a social, economic, and political collapse, and, in this framework, regional integration becomes a fundamental strategy to build international cooperation and stability.

Historically, regional integration agreements have pursued economic goals focusing on trading and commercial initiatives. However, decision making, and policy implementation are driven by members' political positions and interests. As stated by Page (2000), "Trade may well be secondary to political or security objectives or constitute an instrument rather than an objective: it is difficult to find any group that has only a strictly commercial agenda" (ibid, p. 6). In other words, regional integration is developed not only with financial purposes, but its success also resides in the consolidation of political ambitions, thus, politics plays a fundamental role in its development.

On the one hand, regional integration brings political outcomes that might have an impact on stability, for example the construction of peace and security. On the other hand, integration failures may lead to conflict and the fragmentation of relationships between the participants.

Experts on different fields agree on the benefits of integration to promote economic, social, and political growth. First, the success of regional integration cases such as East Asia and the Pacific regions, where intraregional trade and exports have significantly increased revenues, has influenced states' perceptions towards the importance of local alliances.

Second, greater regional integration could drive policies that improve the quality of infrastructure and connectivity. For example, in the Middle East and North Africa logistics costs are among the highest in the world. Geographical obstacles make the region face higher

costs than other regions. Regional efforts to guarantee the quality of transport routes lead to facilitate connectivity, to be more efficient, and enhance mutual learning.

The 2017 report by the World Bank "Better Neighbours: Towards a renewal of economic integration in Latin America" establishes that the more diverse the countries that enter into trade agreements, the more they can complement each other and the greater the profits, either by buying or selling products that make up the same value chain or by exchanging technology, knowledge and talents. In this regard, deeper integration between small and large countries in regions such as the Americas would be much more beneficial.

Third, regional integration is crucial to global integration. A business strategy can make a region much more efficient and powerful, which allows to share knowledge; have more competitive rates among partners that lower the cost of products; generate more business; and, ultimately, be more competitive with the rest of the world.

In this scenario, Latin American and European regions have shown openness towards regional integration. However, current integration processes have had to face many global, regional, and national challenges.

For instance, the pandemic crisis has led to global economic issues and significant social changes which pose a series of questions regarding our way of living, health systems and governments' response to abrupt changes. All these realities bring with them political implications at local, national, and international level. Moreover, consequences of the Covid-19 emergency are yet to be observed, political elites must re-think the way societies and all their institutions are structured, the "rules that govern behaviours" (North 1990), or the concrete design of organizations (Scott, 2003).

In the case of the European Union, the most efficient integration organization so far, the implementation of restrictive measures such as the physical closure of borders, has been criticized. On the one hand, for promoting the need for unified policies, and on the other, for showing incoherence between different responses by national governments of members states. In this context, benefits of being part of the union have been debated, and, in some

cases, the defence of domestic policies is seen as threatening the stability of the European integration.

Based on the International Monetary Fund 2024 report, another obstacle to regional integration is the lack of social and economic infrastructure, a challenge that is particularly evident in Latin America. Due to the geographical location, Latin-American countries are key to inter-American trade, however, some regions have poor road networks coverage, and the inefficient levels of education reduce the possibilities to have personnel trained in border, port, and customs operations (Bhattacharya, Moreau & Pienknagura, 2024).

At a national level, many countries in Europe and Latin-America are experiencing political instability and polarization in which radical discourses have emerged. In this regard, new strategies of communication have attracted part of the young vote and build opinion leaders with a strong presence in social networks. Thus, the discourses that associate political ideologies with social and economic inequalities have been very effective.

In this global context, the Pacific Alliance and the Visegrad Group represent notable examples of regional integration efforts; throughout this dissertation, these cases are referred to with the abbreviations PA and V4, respectively. On the one hand, the Pacific Alliance is a regional integration mechanism formed by Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Peru, with a population of 229,777,189, a total area of 5,144,603 km² and a GDP estimated in €16,238.63 per capita.

PA's three strategic objectives are: to build an area of deep integration with free movement of goods, services, capital and people; to promote the growth, development, and competitiveness of their economies to achieve greater well-being, overcome socioeconomic inequality, and promote the social inclusion of their inhabitants; and to become a platform for political articulation, economic and commercial integration, and projection to the world, with an emphasis on the Asia-Pacific region (Alianza Pacifico, 2021.)

On the other hand, the Visegrad Group is a political and cultural alliance formed by four Central European countries: Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic and Slovakia, all members of

NATO and the European Union. It has a population of 62,530,839 inhabitants (2024 estimate), with a GDP per capita of EUR 13,032.96 and a total area of 533,615 km². Its main objectives are enabling, through integration and definition of common strategies, the insertion of member countries into the European community; the creation of mechanisms to enable economic cooperation among member states, with a view to economic development: establishment of strategies and actions aimed at cooperation in the energy field, and military and scientific cooperation between member countries (The Visegrad group, 2021).

Taking into account the Pacific Alliance and the Visegrad Group characteristics, and the benefits and challenges of international cooperation mentioned before, it is crucial to analyze the role of regional integration in the implementation of effective public policies, how current citizen's demands are addressed and how political discourses shape the present and future of the two regional alliances.

At its core, regional integration is seen as an essential strategy for fostering international cooperation and stability. However, it is important to recognize that integration is not just a function of economics or law, it is deeply embedded in political processes. Through political discourse, actors within regional alliances influence decision-making, policy formulation, and the direction of regional cooperation. Regional integration is thus as much about shaping collective political narratives as it is about economic and legal cooperation.

This dissertation focuses specifically on the role of political discourse in shaping the outcomes of regional integration processes, with particular attention to the Pacific Alliance (PA) in Latin America and the Visegrad Group (V4) in Central Europe. Both groups provide important insights into the ways in which political leaders and institutions use language and discourse to construct collective identities, advance their political agendas, and foster cooperation or division. By studying these two regional alliances, the dissertation aims to fill a critical gap in the existing literature, which has often focused primarily on economic and legal dimensions of integration, with less emphasis on the discursive and political dynamics at play.

1.2 Relevance of the Research Topic

Regional integration, as a multidimensional phenomenon, has been extensively studied across several disciplines such as economics, law, political science, and sociology. However, much of the scholarly attention has been given to the economic or legal mechanisms that drive integration processes, with far less focus on the role of political discourse in shaping the dynamics of regional alliances. Political discourse refers to the language, narratives, and strategies used by political actors to construct meaning and influence public perception within regional integration processes. The way in which leaders in the Pacific Alliance and the Visegrad Group communicate about their political priorities, institutional goals, and national interests can significantly affect the coherence and effectiveness of regional cooperation.

This dissertation seeks to address this gap by analyzing how political discourse impacts regional integration in two key alliances: the Pacific Alliance and the Visegrad Group. While the two alliances differ greatly in terms of their geographical location, historical background, and political structure, they share common challenges in regional integration, including the negotiation of collective identities, the balancing of national interests with regional goals, and the influence of external powers.

Examining political discourse is particularly significant given the current global challenges. In the post-Cold War era, regional alliances are often shaped by global political dynamics, such as the rise of new geopolitical powers, global trade agreements, and the shifting balance of power in international institutions. In this context, understanding how political discourse influences the policies and decisions made within regional alliances provides critical insights into the future of international cooperation and governance. This study specifically dives into these dynamics over the research timeframe from 2019 to 2023.

1.3 Aims and Objectives of the Research

This study aims to address the subjects, objects, realities, and relationships of regional integration within a global scenario marked by social, economic, and political instability.

The pandemic crisis aggravated the lack of credibility and confidence in international and national organizations, and the complex context of communication has radically modified the notion of authority, a fundamental concept to understand the discursive and ideological relationships between the constructions of collective identities. In this scenario, political actors have profoundly transformed their communication strategies, in a process of hybridization and convergence of discourse.

In addition, the last decade electoral results in Latin America and the European Union are evidence of major political shifts. Regional powers have adopted new communicative strategies to attract people's participation, however, in the last years, political discourses have been changing constantly. The principal aim of this dissertation is to enhance our understanding of political discourse in the context of regional integration. More specifically, this research aims to:

- Contribute to the theoretical understanding of political discourse in regional alliances, advancing the scholarship in political science, discourse analysis, and international relations.
- Investigate the comparative dynamics of political discourse within two prominent regional alliances, the Pacific Alliance and the Visegrad Group. The research will examine how political discourse in these two alliances shapes decision-making, institutional development, and the development of common policies.
- Examine the rhetoric used by political leaders to advance regional integration agendas. This includes understanding how leaders use political discourse to influence public opinion, promote cooperation, and negotiate regional policies.
- Explore citizens' perceptions of regional integration through the analysis of public opinion, particularly focusing on policy domains such as trade, migration, security,

environmental protection, and social welfare. The research will assess whether citizens view regional integration positively or negatively and how this perception shapes the broader integration process.

- Investigate the influence of external actors on the political discourse within regional alliances, with a particular focus on how international organizations and powerful states such as the European Union and the United States shape the political narratives and agendas of regional actors.

A fundamental element in this comparative study is the conceptualization of current policy areas which poses different questions concerning the current worldwide political processes. Firstly, the relation among the different policy area issues and how its components interact. Secondly, the question of the effect of regional integration on policy areas involving external issues to examine its performance. This involves an investigation of implementing the economic and political interests of the participants of the integration organizations towards third parties. Thirdly, it is key to analyze the importance of each policy dimension and assess whether there is a focus on a certain group of issues while ignoring others.

1.4 Research Questions

To guide this study, five research questions have been formulated, each addressing key aspects of political discourse in the Pacific Alliance and the Visegrad Group:

- How has political discourse in the Pacific Alliance and the Visegrad Group shaped regional integration, the development of common policies, norms, and institutions over the past five years? How have these discourses evolved, and what are the implications of these shifts for the future of localized cooperation?
- What are the similarities and differences in the communication patterns and discursive dynamics among the member states of the Pacific Alliance and the Visegrad Group? What factors contribute to these variations, and how do they influence the internal dynamics of cooperation in each group?

- How do political actors (individual, collective, and institutional) use discourse to influence decision-making and policy formulation within regional alliances? To what extent do elites and non-elites shape discourse, and what role does identity politics play in this process?
- What are the dominant narratives surrounding regional integration within the public sphere, and how do citizens' opinions influence or reflect official discourse? How do citizens' views align with or differ from the narratives advanced by political leaders within their respective governments?
- How have global crises such as migration and the COVID-19 pandemic shaped the political discourse within the Pacific Alliance and the Visegrad Group? How have external events influenced the integration processes within these groups?

These questions are designed to provide a nuanced understanding of the role of political discourse in shaping the outcomes of regional integration, focusing on the internal dynamics of the alliances and their interaction with external actors.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

To explore the relationship between political discourse and regional integration, this research draws upon a combination of regional integration theory, political discourse analysis, and constructivist theory in international relations. This framework enables a multifaceted approach to the study, providing both theoretical depth and empirical relevance.

Regional Integration Theory

Regional integration is a long-established field of study within political science and international relations. Early theories of regional integration, such as neofunctionalism (Haas, 1958) and functionalism (Mitrany, 1943), argued that integration occurs when countries engage in cooperative economic and political ventures. These theories emphasize

the process by which countries gradually pool their sovereignty in areas such as trade, economic policy, and security. However, these theories have been critiqued for being overly focused on functional cooperation and for underestimating the political dimensions of integration.

The post-Cold War era saw a shift toward a more multidimensional approach to integration, with theorists like Hettne and Söderbaum (2007) suggesting that regional integration processes are influenced by factors such as identity construction, political narratives, and global geopolitics. Theories of new regionalism highlight the role of ideational factors such as identity, values, and cultural affinities in shaping integration processes (Söderbaum, 2004). This theoretical perspective aligns well with the focus of this dissertation on political discourse as a key driver of regional cooperation.

Political Discourse Analysis

Political discourse analysis (PDA) offers a valuable tool for understanding how political communication shapes decision-making, policy formation, and identity construction. According to Van Dijk (2003), discourse is not only a medium for communication but also a tool for constructing and reinforcing ideologies. In the context of regional integration, political discourse serves as a key mechanism for shaping national and regional identities, framing issues of cooperation, and influencing public support.

Framing theory, as discussed by scholars like Entman (1993), provides a useful lens through which to analyze how political actors use language to define problems, construct solutions, and advocate for specific policies. Similarly, constructivist theories in international relations (McCourt, 2016) emphasize how the discourses of political actors shape identities and interests, which in turn drive the integration process. This theoretical framework is particularly relevant for studying regional alliances like the PA and V4, where political leaders must navigate diverse national interests and identity constructs to promote collective action.

1.6 Methodology

This dissertation adopts a qualitative research approach with a focus on critical discourse analysis (CDA) as the primary methodological framework. CDA allows for an in-depth examination of the discursive strategies used by political leaders and institutions to construct meaning and shape the political landscape within regional alliances. By analyzing speeches, official documents, and media coverage, this research will identify key discursive patterns, framing strategies, and the role of identity construction in the formation of regional policies.

A comparative case study design was used to analyze the political discourse within the Pacific Alliance and the Visegrad Group. This method allowed for a detailed examination of how discourse functions in two distinct regional contexts, both of which face unique challenges in terms of political cohesion and integration. Data was collected from a variety of sources, including speeches, official documents, press releases, and media coverage. Secondary data, such as scholarly articles and international surveys, provided additional context for the analysis. The data was coded and analyzed using softwares such as ATLAS.ti and Discourse Network Analyzer (DNA) which support thematic and discourse analysis.

The data underwent a multi-layered analysis, focusing on both microanalytic (denotative) and interpretative (connotative) levels of discourse. The analysis examined how power dynamics, identity formation, and framing strategies shape political communication within the PA and V4. Key themes such as nationalism, identity politics, and external influence were explored in relation to the regional integration processes.

1.7 Expected Contributions

This dissertation is expected to make several significant contributions to the fields of political discourse analysis and regional integration theory. By examining the political discourse within the Pacific Alliance and the Visegrad Group, the research will provide new insights into how language and narrative shape the legitimacy, cohesion, and effectiveness of regional alliances. This study will also shed light on how external actors such as the European Union

and the United States impact the political discourse and integration processes within these groups.

The following hypotheses guide the research framework and reflect the expected outcomes of this study:

H1: Political Discourse and Power Dynamics within PA and V4

The analysis of political discourse within PA and V4 is expected to reveal that power dynamics, rather than cultural ties or historical context, play a central role in shaping regional integration processes. Specifically, the research anticipates identifying key political actors whether state leaders, dominant political parties, or institutions that shape the regional integration agenda. These actors likely exert considerable influence over policy decisions and the development of shared norms and institutions, reflecting the power asymmetries within the region.

The findings are expected to demonstrate that while cultural links and historical context may occasionally inform political positions, they are secondary to the influence of economic and political power in the formulation of common policies. Additionally, this discourse may expose tensions or alliances based on relative economic strengths and geopolitical interests, which could further shape the trajectory of integration. Power asymmetries among member states will likely be evident in the shaping of regional policy decisions, with more dominant states exerting greater influence over the direction of common policies.

H2: Patterns, Similarities, and Differences in Discourse among PA and V4 Member States

The analysis of communication and discursive dynamics within PA and V4 is expected to highlight both common patterns and notable differences across member states. Given the diversity in political systems, economic interests, and national priorities, the research is likely to identify variations in the way different states within these alliances communicate and position themselves on key issues.

One anticipated outcome is that while joint declarations and shared statements may create a sense of momentum toward regional integration, they may also reflect diverging national priorities or constraints that shape each state's participation. These divergent discourses could either strengthen or challenge the overall effectiveness of regional integration efforts. Common threads in political discourse, such as shared support for certain policies, may emerge, but the research will also reveal differences driven by national politics, economic priorities, and external influences.

The research is expected to show that political discourse within these alliances creates opportunities for cooperation, but also potential challenges due to differing national interests, with some member states leveraging discourse as a tool to shape policy according to their own priorities.

H3: Political Actors' Use of Discourse to Influence Decision-Making

The role of political leaders and institutions in influencing decision-making through discourse is expected to be evident in the study. Framing, as a strategic discursive tool, is likely to be identified as a primary method through which political actors shape perceptions and influence public opinion on regional integration issues.

Framing is expected to be particularly prominent in the political rhetoric surrounding regional integration, with leaders using it to create narratives that either promote or resist further integration. These frames will likely be shaped by national interests, including economic concerns, security issues, and domestic political dynamics. The research will reveal how political leaders use discourse to advance their own political agendas, appeal to domestic constituencies, or resist certain integration initiatives.

Additionally, the study will highlight the importance of identity and nationalism in shaping these discourses. Political leaders may invoke national identity to either bolster support for integration (by framing it as a means of preserving national sovereignty and interests) or to justify opposition to certain integration measures.

H4: Public Opinion and Perception of Regional Integration

Citizens' perceptions of PA and V4 regional integrations are expected to play a significant role in shaping the cohesion and legitimacy of the alliances. Political discourse is anticipated to be a key factor in how these perceptions are formed, as it influences both public attitudes toward regional cooperation and citizens' identification with the alliance.

The research is likely to reveal that public opinion on regional integration is influenced by how political leaders frame the benefits or challenges of such cooperation. When framed positively emphasizing economic benefits, security, or cultural ties citizens are likely to show more support for integration. Conversely, negative framing, highlighting economic disparities or perceived threats to national identity, may fuel opposition to deeper integration.

Furthermore, the research will explore how public opinion is linked to collective identity within the alliances. Citizens' support for regional integration may be shaped by their perceptions of shared values, norms, and identity, which are reinforced or contested through political discourse. The study will also consider how public discourse, including media portrayals of regional integration, influences citizens' support for or resistance to the alliances.

H5: Impact of External Actors on PA and V4 Integrations

The influence of external actors, particularly the European Union (EU) and the United States (USA), is expected to play a pivotal role in shaping the discursive interactions within PA and V4. External discourse is likely to impact how member states communicate and position themselves within the regional integration process.

The analysis will likely reveal that external actors, particularly powerful ones like the EU, exert considerable influence on the political discourse of PA and V4 states. This influence may manifest in the form of discursive pressure on member states to align with broader EU or Western political and economic goals, such as promoting democratic values, market liberalization, or security cooperation.

Additionally, external actors may frame regional integration in ways that either support or challenge PA and V4 initiatives. For example, the EU may promote deeper integration among V4 members to strengthen regional stability, while external actors like Russia or China may present alternative models of cooperation that challenge the EU's influence.

The research is expected to uncover the ways in which external discourse shapes the internal dynamics of PA and V4, influencing both member states' policy decisions and public attitudes toward regional integration.

While the emphasis on how external actors shape regional integration through supportive or competing discursive frameworks is fundamental, it is equally necessary to examine how integration projects are constructed from within. In other words, beyond external influence, regional cohesion also depends on the capacity of political leaders to articulate shared narratives, identities, and collective purposes that legitimize cooperation among member states.

For this reason, this research has focused on examining and comparing the efforts of political leaders to construct collective identities through discourses of belonging. This process aims to consolidate and create a new shared understanding that could support and promote regional integration. One example of this was the crisis triggered by the two world wars, which made imperative for European individual and collective ambitions to be reconfigured. With the end of the bipolar world order, in 1991, the V4 initiative meant both a return to historical regional cooperation and an attempt of a group of Eastern and Central European states to re-position themselves in a re-integrating Europe.

Meanwhile, within Latin America's context, collective imaginary was not changed so abruptly at a specific point in time, as it was in Europe. Instead, Latin American countries have experienced their own national crises at different moments and in different circumstances, making it difficult for solely discourse to find in regional integration a way to rewrite national and international identities.

Integration discourses that emerge from damaging events have the capacity to connect the interests and identities of societies that could have been seen as rivals, fostering a feeling of acceptance and making individuals believe they have a common fate belonging to the union, which favours the idea of integration. For instance, regardless of Germany and France wars, these nations constructed a new collective identity in which having united interests and identities was the basis of pro-regional integration policies.

This research aims to identify, locate, contextualize, and map out the discursive strategies employed as collective identities and carry out a comparative analysis between the Pacific Alliance and the Visegrad Group. On the one hand, special attention will be given to citizens' and leaders' discourses, and the identification of discourses that are competing amongst themselves and resisting or facilitating the construction of a regional identity.

On the other hand, the analysis of social and economic actors in the decision-making process will allow to identify the types of actors that participate in these processes, the positions they adopt towards integration negotiations and the impact of their communicative strategies.

As noted by Moravcsik (1993), social and economic actors do not participate directly in the decision-making process, however, they do participate indirectly through pressure they exert on their respective governments, and considering that the only political actors to occupy a seat in the intergovernmental negotiation table are national governments, citizen participation is channelled through the organizations that represent it.

Historically, political leaders have played a leading role in nation building, however, at a regional level the role of heads of government might be overshadowed due to the nature of regional integration, which leaves no room for imposition of guidelines and times by one state over the others. As stated by Haas (1975), integration as an open process, is described by the spill-over from one area to another. Although the end point is supposedly open, "it is clear that it must be institutional" (Mutimer, 1994: 31). This would involve technological and scientific changes which would lead to "political learning" from national bureaucracies, political leaders, and international organizations.

Nevertheless, the spill-over process can be unpredictable. Consequently, Haas began to emphasize the role of ideas and “consensual knowledge”, paying greater attention to the relevance of political leaders and their objectives (Waltz, 1991). Therefore, the role that individuals can play in the international arena, and the institutional contexts that can provide incentives or restrictions for their actions, must be clarified as key elements of a more general development.

In the European case, supranational institutions and leaders have managed to generate positive effects on integration by demonstrating that the strength or weakness of the heads of government are the most important factor when it comes to explain the positive or negative results of the processes of regionalization. Regarding Latin American intergovernmentalism, lack of objectivity has led to retreats from integration, as the Venezuelan case currently suggests. Although these views may be considered negative, this research does not intend to support such negative perspectives but contribute to avoiding them.

Having established the central focus of this research analyzing the role of political discourse in shaping regional integration within the PA and V4 this study now turns to a comprehensive review of the existing literature. The literature review will provide the theoretical and empirical foundations necessary to understand the complex interplay between discourse, power, identity, and regional cooperation. By reviewing relevant scholarly work, we will examine how political discourse has been studied in the context of regional integration, particularly in relation to the V4 and similar alliances.

The review will begin by exploring key theories of political discourse and their application to regional integration processes. We will then delve into the role of political actors in shaping collective identities, national narratives, and regional cooperation through language. Attention will be paid to existing studies on the influence of power dynamics within political discourse, as well as the strategic use of framing in shaping public opinion and policy outcomes.

Additionally, the literature review will highlight the significance of external actors, such as the EU and the USA, and their discursive impact on regional alliances. This will allow us to contextualize the influence of global crises and geopolitical tensions on the political discourse within PA and V4.

Ultimately, this literature review will set the stage for the empirical analysis that follows, helping to situate this research within the broader scholarly conversation on political discourse and regional integration.

2. CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The relationship between political discourse and regional integration has received limited attention in scholarly research, despite the increasing recognition of the importance of discourse in shaping political processes. The primary aim of this literature review is to explore the theories and scholarly works relevant to this dissertation's investigation of political discourse within regional alliances, specifically the Pacific Alliance (PA) and the Visegrad Group (V4).

This chapter will provide an overview of the theoretical framework underpinning this study, detailing the key contributions from regional integration theory, political discourse analysis (PDA), Positioning theory and constructivist theory in international relations.

2.1 Theories of Regional Integration

Theories of regional integration have long been a central focus in the field of international relations, providing a variety of explanations for the processes through which states cooperate across borders. These theories, which have evolved over time, are particularly relevant in understanding the role of political discourse within regional alliances.

2.1.1 Neofunctionalism

The first major theory to address regional integration was neofunctionalism, developed by Ernst B. Haas in the 1950s. Neofunctionalism posits that economic integration in one area will likely lead to further integration in other sectors, as states become increasingly dependent on each other. This theory emphasizes the role of supranational institutions in promoting integration, arguing that they act as neutral actors that can facilitate the negotiation and coordination of policies across member states.

In Haas' view, regional integration is a process of "spillover," where initial economic cooperation in one area leads to the integration of other areas (such as political or security

cooperation) as states find it more advantageous to work together than to remain independent. Although neofunctionalism has been criticized for overemphasizing the role of economic factors in integration and ignoring political and cultural aspects, it has laid the groundwork for understanding the dynamics of regional cooperation (Haas, 1958).

This theory has important implications for studying political discourse in regional integration. Since neofunctionalism emphasizes the increasing interdependence of states, political leaders within regional alliances like the Pacific Alliance and Visegrad Group may use discourse to frame regional cooperation as necessary for economic stability and growth. Discourse thus plays a key role in legitimizing the integration process by aligning political actors with the economic goals of the alliance.

2.1.2 Functionalism

Functionalism, developed by David Mitrany, complements neofunctionalism by suggesting that cooperation in non-political areas (such as technical or economic cooperation) will gradually lead to peace and stability. Functionalists argue that the gradual pooling of sovereignty in non-political matters will create the foundation for further political integration over time. According to Mitrany (1948), the success of regional cooperation lies in focusing on technical, everyday tasks (such as trade, transportation, and environmental cooperation) that can benefit all member states, regardless of their ideological differences.

Functionalism's relevance to political discourse lies in the manner in which leaders of regional alliances employ technocratic language to promote integration. In the Pacific Alliance and Visegrad Group, political leaders may emphasize the practical benefits of cooperation, using language that downplays ideological or cultural differences in favor of functional benefits that can advance common goals.

2.1.3 New Regionalism

In the post-Cold War era, regional integration took on new dimensions with the rise of new regionalism, a concept that was particularly influential in Latin America and other developing regions. The new regionalism theory, as articulated by scholars like Bertil Hettne and Fredrik Söderbaum (2000), emphasizes the multidimensional nature of regional cooperation, which involves not only economic ties but also political, social, and cultural elements. New regionalism recognizes that regional cooperation is not solely driven by economic factors, but also by political dynamics such as identity-building and the desire for political autonomy within a broader global system.

New regionalism also introduces the concept of regionness, which refers to the process by which countries within a region come to see themselves as a cohesive political entity with shared interests (Hettne & Söderbaum, 2000). Political discourse plays a critical role in the creation of regionness by framing the shared identity of the group and its collective goals. In both the Pacific Alliance and the Visegrad Group, political leaders may use discourse to construct a sense of regional identity, framing the alliance as a space where member states can protect and promote their interests in a changing global order.

New regionalism's emphasis on collective identity and shared values makes it a particularly valuable lens through which to analyze the role of discourse in regional integration. Political discourse in the Pacific Alliance and the Visegrad Group can help shape the narrative of how member states view each other and their roles within the alliance, influencing the depth and success of cooperation.

The theoretical framework as far as the external perspective is concerned is found in the Great Transformation by Polanyi (1994). Originally, integration theories were developed to explain the rise and fall of the market society in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries but are currently used to characterize changes in the current international political economy and are interpreted, consequently, as a great transformation.

The new regionalism understood as a political project would question the homogenizing trend of contemporary globalization by working in favour of a multicentre world order, with regions that are not tyrannical but central, each one originating in historical civilizations, but multicultural, similar to the historical empires that have offered humanity relevant organizational systems. These systems would coexist with a normative universe of convergent cosmopolitan values created through dialogue and understanding between the parties (Björn, 2002).

When Hettne and Söderbaum (2000), Polanyi (1994), and Björn (2002) examined both old and new regionalism, their findings provided important theoretical insights that contributed to the development of the new regionalism framework. First, the approach highlights the diversity of actors involved in regional processes, moving beyond strictly state-centered perspectives. Second, it underlines the existence of a “real” region as a socially and historically constructed space, rather than merely a formal entity defined by its member states. Third, within the broader context of globalization, regional integration is understood as a deliberate process of merging national economies through structured cooperation among a group of nation-states.

The point of view of the new regionalism tried to consider that the process of regionalization itself is also different in developed and developing regions, thus it gives rise to numerous regionalisms. In addition, the processes of globalization and regionalization interact in areas with different characteristics, which is why various modalities of regionalization appear. This is evident if the new regionalism is compared with the old, or if the new regionalism in Latin America is contrasted with that of Europe. Even in Latin America the regional dynamics of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and Mercosur differ considerably (Page, 2000). For this reason, it is important to analyze the internal and environmental conditions relevant to each case.

2.2 Political Discourse Analysis (PDA)

While regional integration theories focus primarily on institutional, economic, and political factors, political discourse analysis (PDA) provides a valuable approach for understanding how language, narratives, and ideologies shape political decision-making. PDA examines how political actors use language to construct meaning, shape public opinion, and influence policy. In the context of regional alliances, discourse can play a critical role in framing regional cooperation, legitimizing integration efforts, and mobilizing public support for integration initiatives.

2.2.1 Ideological Underpinnings of Discourse

Political discourse is inherently tied to ideology, as it reflects the beliefs, values, and interests of the political actors who use it. As stated by Teun A. van Dijk (2003), political discourse is a vehicle through which ideologies are communicated and socially constructed. In the case of the Pacific Alliance and Visegrad Group, political leaders may use discourse to express and promote ideologies that serve the interests of their respective countries, while also fostering a collective regional identity. For instance, neoliberal economic policies that underpin the Pacific Alliance's integration process may be articulated through discourse that emphasizes market-driven growth and economic liberalization, while the Visegrad Group's discourse may highlight shared historical experiences and national sovereignty.

Van Dijk's work on discourse as a tool for ideological struggle suggests that political discourse within regional alliances is often a battleground where competing ideologies clash over the direction of cooperation. Leaders may use discourse to challenge the dominant ideological frameworks or to justify policies that align with their national interests.

2.2.2 Framing and Power in Discourse

The concept of framing plays a significant role in political discourse analysis. Erving Goffman (1974) introduced the idea of framing as a way of structuring reality to influence how people interpret events and issues. In the context of regional integration, political leaders can use discourse to frame the benefits of regional cooperation in a way that resonates with citizens and political elites.

The use of framing in political discourse is not neutral; it is inherently linked to power. Michel Foucault (1979) argued that discourse is a mechanism of power that structures social relations by shaping how people think about and understand the world. In the Pacific Alliance and Visegrad Group, political leaders may use discourse to negotiate power relations, either within the alliance or in relation to external actors, such as the United States or the European Union. For example, the discourse of dominant member states in these alliances can shape the direction of policy and integration, influencing smaller states within the group.

2.2.3 Discourse and National Identity

National identity plays a critical role in the discourse of regional integration. Political leaders use discourse to craft narratives of shared identity that are central to regional cooperation. In both the Pacific Alliance and the Visegrad Group, discourse is a tool for constructing collective regional identities that transcend national borders. Constructivist theory in international relations suggests that regional integration processes are deeply influenced by identity-building and the way political leaders use discourse to create a sense of shared belonging within the alliance (Petrović, 2025).

The political positioning of leaders within both the PA and V4 can be analyzed through the lens of positioning theory, which posits that political actors use discourse to construct their roles within a broader social and political conversation. In both the PA and V4, leaders

position themselves and their countries as key players in shaping regional outcomes, but the nature of their positioning differs based on the alliance's core values and goals.

For the PA, the discourse is primarily framed around economic cooperation, and political leaders position themselves as pragmatic actors who prioritize economic integration over ideological or cultural concerns. The language of economic benefit, such as job creation, trade growth, and market access, serves to align political positioning with the broader goals of the alliance. However, within this economic framework, political leaders also position themselves as defenders of their countries' interests, negotiating terms that protect domestic economies from potential external pressures.

In the V4, the positioning is more closely tied to national identity and cultural values. Leaders within this alliance use discourse to affirm their countries' historical and cultural ties, positioning the V4 as a cohesive unit that represents the interests of Central and Eastern Europe. An initial exploration to the group webpage¹ suggests that political positioning often frames integration efforts as a means of safeguarding sovereignty, cultural identity, and democratic values within the context of a larger European framework.

2.3 Theoretical Foundation of Positioning Theory

Positioning theory, as developed by Davies and Harré (1990), provides a foundational framework for understanding how individuals and political actors position themselves within discourse. According to Davies and Harré, positioning is a discursive process through which people are located in conversations as participants in jointly produced storylines. These storylines serve as a narrative framework that allows individuals to validate their actions and words within a specific context. Positioning is dynamic and contextual, with individuals shifting positions depending on the conversational setting, the interlocutors involved, and the subject matter at hand.

¹ <https://www.visegradgroup.eu/home>

Positioning theory is rooted in the work of Hollway (1984), who first introduced the concept of positioning as a way of understanding how gender and identity are constructed within discourse. Hollway's framework focused on the subjectivities that women and men experience as the product of their positioning in social and cultural discourses. Over time, positioning theory has expanded to encompass a broader range of identities and social roles, providing a valuable tool for analyzing political discourse.

A key distinction in positioning theory is the difference between interactive positioning, where individuals are positioned by others, and reflective positioning, where individuals position themselves. In political discourse, these two forms of positioning can be observed in the way political leaders and parties present themselves (reflective positioning) and in the way they are positioned by the media, the public, or other political actors (interactive positioning).

Positioning is also closely related to the notion of narrative or storylines, which serve as the basis for positioning. In the view of Harré and van Langenhove (1999), storylines can be drawn from cultural repertoires or invented by the participants in a conversation. In political discourse, these storylines are essential for constructing policy positions and justifying political actions. By analyzing the way political actors draw on or create storylines, we can gain insight into the ideological foundations of their political positions and the strategies they use to align themselves with or against regional integration.

2.3.1 Political Discourse Analysis and its Role in Positioning

Political discourse analysis is an essential methodology for examining how political actors position themselves within the broader societal and institutional context. Fairclough and Fairclough (2012) argue that discourse is a form of knowledge that structures experiences and shapes power relations. Political discourse, therefore, is not simply a reflection of reality but is actively involved in constructing social and political realities. By analyzing the language and structures of political discourse, researchers can uncover how political

positions are constructed and contested, how power is negotiated, and how political ideologies are expressed.

Fairclough and Fairclough propose a layered analysis of political discourse that includes both a microanalytic descriptive level (denotative) and an interpretative level (connotative). The denotative level focuses on the literal meaning of words and phrases used in discourse, while the connotative level examines the ideological and emotional associations that words and phrases evoke. This dual approach allows researchers to explore both the surface-level meaning of political discourse and the underlying ideological and power dynamics.

At the microanalytic level, discourse is often structured around specific speech acts, such as requests, assertions, promises, and threats, which serve to position the speaker and the listener in particular roles. By examining these speech acts, researchers can identify how political actors use language to establish their authority, assert their positions on policy issues, and influence the attitudes and behaviors of their audience.

At the interpretative level, discourse is seen as a tool for constructing and negotiating political ideologies. Fairclough and Fairclough (2012) emphasize the importance of practical reasoning in political discourse, arguing that all political actions and decisions are shaped by underlying ideological assumptions. In the context of regional integration, political actors' discourses are informed by their values and beliefs about the relationship between the nation-state, the region, and the global political system. By examining these discourses, we can understand how political actors position themselves in relation to regional integration, economic cooperation, and national sovereignty.

2.3.2 Political Positioning and Policy Formation

Political positions are not only shaped by discursive practices but also by the political and institutional structures within which they are formed. Pupovac (2015) highlights the importance of policy areas, such as health, education, and economic policy, in shaping

political positions and determining electoral success. In the context of regional integration, political parties position themselves based on their stance toward these policy areas and the broader political ideologies they represent. Policy positions are often framed as responses to societal issues, such as economic inequality, national security, or cultural identity, and political actors use discourse to justify their positions and rally support.

Pupovac draws on the work of Mudde (1999), who explored the role of single-issue politics in electoral success. Mudde's research demonstrated that political parties are often able to attract support by focusing on a single issue, such as immigration or nationalism, but that these issues are typically framed within a broader ideological context. Political actors use discourse to position themselves on a spectrum of ideological positions, such as socialist versus capitalist or libertarian versus authoritarian. This ideological framework shapes how they approach issues related to regional integration, with parties on the left typically emphasizing the economic benefits of integration, while those on the right may focus on national sovereignty and the potential risks of losing control over domestic policies.

In the case of regional integration, political actors often use positioning to frame the debate in terms of national interest, economic benefit, or cultural identity. For example, parties may position themselves as defenders of national sovereignty, warning against the loss of control over domestic policies and decision-making. Alternatively, parties may position themselves as advocates of economic cooperation and regional stability, emphasizing the benefits of integration for trade, investment, and development.

Laver (2001) provides a useful framework for understanding how political leaders influence the positioning of their parties and the formulation of policies. Laver (2001) indicates electoral success is often driven by the ability of political leaders to distinguish themselves from their opponents by adopting clear and polemical stances on controversial issues. Leaders who take strong positions on issues such as immigration, law and order, or economic reform can attract support by positioning themselves as champions of public opinion. In the context of regional integration, leaders who adopt strong stances on the potential benefits or

risks of integration can shape the political debate and influence public attitudes toward policy.

2.3.3 The Role of Language in Political Positioning

Language plays a fundamental role in shaping political discourse and positioning. Romaine (2023) emphasizes the importance of language as a tool for communication, identity formation, and the negotiation of power. Political discourse is inherently ideological, with the language used by political actors reflecting their beliefs, values, and interests. By analyzing the language of political discourse, we can uncover the ways in which political actors use language to construct meaning, justify actions, and position themselves in relation to policy issues.

Language allows political actors to frame issues in particular ways, influencing public perceptions and shaping political debate. For example, the language used to describe regional integration can evoke different emotional responses, depending on the framing of the issue. Political leaders who emphasize the economic benefits of integration may use language that highlights the potential for growth and prosperity, while those who are critical of integration may use language that emphasizes the risks of economic dependency and cultural loss.

Romaine's (2023) analysis of language stresses the idea that political discourse is always situated within a broader cultural context. The meanings of words and phrases are not fixed but are shaped by the historical, social, and political contexts in which they are used. This is particularly important in the analysis of regional integration discourses, where different political actors draw on different cultural repertoires to justify their positions.

Citizen participation and the involvement of civil society organisations in different kinds of regionalisation processes are challenges. Considering the European experience, assumptions are based on conventional views of civil participation, such as the role of formal debate for social and economic representation, as well as of regional parliamentary structures. It also

highlights some of the dilemmas involved in establishing bases for legitimacy of regional systems. Regional models and structures do not inherently have any greater merit than others. Nor can particular structures of democratic government drawn from national experience ever be simply transferred to regional level (Cooke & Kothari, 2001).

According to Fung (2015), the guiding principles can only be the effectiveness and appropriateness of institutional arrangements in individual contexts, which are seen in the light of certain common basic standards of democratic behaviour. It is argued that, beneath the necessary variety of goals and structures across the world, it is valid to establish some universal principles of good governance which permit a certain degree of evaluation. In this sense, there is an attempt to explore the possibilities and limits of establishing standards and indicators of “good regional governance”.

Political discourse seeks to persuade citizens in different ways. This study aims to describe in detail the intentions behind these discourses and through the implementation of analytical tools to identify the type of political discourses citizens are exposed to, nowadays. Political discourse cannot be understood without analyzing the power of words, the implicit agreements, and the importance of how to produce a persuasive discourse. Therefore, rhetorical research is presented as the backbone of politics and social sciences.

Due to the development and evolution of media, it is fundamental to face the need to carry out an objective discursive analysis. Citizens are saturated with large amounts of information making it hard to identify facts and understand the content of news. Implementing critical thinking strategies becomes more difficult every day.

Thus, today’s society needs critical thinking tools that allow passive political actors to analyze in detail discourse changes and variations. This research aims to adopt critical reasoning in order to interpret political messages and their meanings.

2.3.4 Policy area classification

Policy change is influenced by the positions government takes in formulating policies and deciding how they will be implemented as well. Components of the political system organized around fundamental issues (e.g. Sustainable transport, Agriculture, Health, etc.) are known as policy areas.

2.3.4.1 External boundary drawing: The exclusionary dimension

Kitschelt presents the notion of citizen taking into consideration the collective category. As stated by Kitschelt, “political systems erect boundaries between the in-group and the out-group on the basis of place of residence and/or biological descent” (Kitschelt, 2007, p. 1179). As pointed by De Vries and Marks (2012), the exclusionary dimension involves particular subgroups of political issues such as multiculturalism, immigration, ethnicity, etc. Hence, it is likely to explain just a sphere of political’ positions, while the other areas are covered by other dimensions in the policy area, namely, the authoritarian and economic dimensions.

2.3.4.2 Socio-political governance: the authoritarian dimension

Concerning the modes chosen to make group decisions, the socio-political governance dimension must be introduced. It can be explained as the set of rules which drive behaviour in a community, and it manifests, as Kitschelt (2007) states: “the balance between compliance with a higher group authority versus members’ rights to choose their own lifestyles, express individual preferences, and make them heard in the formation of collective decisions” (p. 1178). Thus, this balance involves the ideological elements recognised as the authoritarian dimension.

2.3.4.3 Attitudes pertaining to distribution: The economic dimension

The third dimension, the economic one refers to the distribution of resources and the political postures and discourses towards the question of readjustment versus spontaneous economic order (Kitschelt & McGann, 1997). Since the 20th century, economic issues such as market regulation, redistributions and protectionism, among others, have played a significant role in the in the political system formation (Lipset & Rokkan, 1967). In that matter, according to American political researchers, the behaviour of integration cannot be addressed based just on one economic issue (Bakker, Jolly, & Polk, 2012, p. 222).

Consequently, as pointed by De Vries & Marks (2012), “in recent years, the debate on the economic dimensionality has intensified” (p. 186). In fact, different phenomena such as globalization and the variations in citizens’ principles, have led to the idea that the debate on the state’s role in the economy is determined by rival ideologies (De Vries & Marks, 2012). The dimensions described above will be addressed in the analysis of each policy issue.

2.4 Constructivism and Regional Integration

Constructivism offers an essential theoretical lens for understanding how political discourse shapes the process of regional integration. As observed by constructivist theories, the identities and interests of states are not fixed but are shaped by social processes, including discourse. In the context of regional integration, political leaders play a critical role in constructing a shared regional identity that can serve as the foundation for cooperation.

Alexander Wendt (1999) argued that state behavior is not solely determined by material factors such as power or security, but also by ideas, identities, and social relations. This perspective highlights the importance of discourse in shaping regional integration processes. Political leaders use discourse to create and reinforce shared meanings about the goals and values of regional alliances, and these meanings, in turn, influence the trajectory of integration.

In both the Pacific Alliance and the Visegrad Group, political discourse is a tool for constructing and promoting regional identities that serve as the basis for integration efforts. By framing the alliance in terms of shared values, such as economic liberalism in the case of the Pacific Alliance or sovereign equality in the Visegrad Group, leaders can foster a sense of community and cohesion within the alliance.

2.5 Gaps in the Literature

While much has been written on regional integration and political discourse, there remains a significant gap in the literature regarding comparative discourse analysis of regional alliances, particularly in regions such as Latin America and Central Europe. Most studies have focused either on individual alliances or on broader, global frameworks like the European Union. However, there is limited research that compares how political discourse operates in different regional contexts, such as the Pacific Alliance and the Visegrad Group.

This dissertation seeks to fill this gap by offering a comparative analysis of political discourse in these two alliances. By focusing on how political leaders in the PA and V4 use discourse to shape integration processes, this study will contribute to a deeper understanding of how political communication influences the success and challenges of regional cooperation.

3. CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY (RESEARCH DESIGN & METHODS)

3.1 Methodology

This section describes the methodology that was espoused by this study to explore the subjects, objects, realities, and relationships of regional integration within a global scenario marked by social, economic, and political instability. The chapter begins with the outline of the type of study, researcher's role, the context in which the study was carried out, and the case' selection criteria. This is followed by an overview of the techniques and instruments for data collection, the account of the evidence and the reliability and validity of the data.

3.1.1 Type of study

Regional integration, as a phenomenon of international relations, has been studied from various economic, legal, political and sociological approaches. This reveals that integration is essentially a multidimensional phenomenon. However, one-dimensional approaches have prevailed, focusing especially on the commercial aspects of cooperation. This research seeks to advance in the study of regional integration from a more discursive political perspective, identifying success indicators and the main components of regional integration processes.

Following a constructivist paradigm, based on the interpretation of texts, "a written text is a testimony that can be interpreted" (Canedo, 2009, p.114), accordingly data such as presidential/prime ministers' statements, joint declarations, framework agreement, declarations and inter-institutional and multilateral agreements will be analyzed.

Trading indicators will not be explored, instead the discursive behavior and political evolution of the cooperation. This approach does not consist in measuring variables through statistical analysis or by conducting experiments, but in observing and understanding their nature (Vega et al., 2014, p.526). For this reason, the Pacific Alliance and the Visegrad group will be explored as actors at the regional and multilateral level in the international system.

According to Mertens (2004), it is the nature of the research question which leads a researcher to adopt a qualitative method such as a case study approach. To examine political discourses on policy areas, a comparative case study will be conducted.

Gerring (2004) states that comparative case study involves the identification of patterns and the analysis of the similarities and differences among two or more cases. As for this research, the comparative case design allows a deeper understanding of the success of Pacific Alliance and Visegrad Group and the implementation of domestic public policies, citizens' participation, and political leaders' roles during the pandemic crisis.

Although, comparative case studies can be used to improve theory construction because the researcher must examine the problem from different angles (Bryman 2012), the aim of this research is to make explanations about causes and effects of political discourse shifts in Europe and Latin-America, through structured and systemic contrasting of two cases (Dickovick & Eastwood, 2016).

The methodological approach of case study research is particularly suited for the comparative analysis of political discourse within the Pacific Alliance (PA) and the Visegrad Group (V4). As both alliances are distinct in their geopolitical, economic, and cultural contexts, a case study approach allows for an in-depth exploration of how political leaders construct and contest positions related to regional integration, economic cooperation, and national sovereignty in these two settings.

By employing case studies, this research can examine the real-world contexts in which political discourse is produced and contested within PA and V4. The complex dynamics of political discourse in each alliance are shaped not only by national policies and political climates but also by broader regional and global influences. This holistic approach enables an investigation into how different actors within the two alliances position themselves on integration issues, while considering the political, economic, and social environments that inform their rhetoric and decision-making.

The case study methodology provides an opportunity to explore the diverse strategies political leaders in both alliances use to frame regional integration debates. For instance, how do V4 leaders, with their shared history of Central and Eastern European identity, differ from PA leaders, who represent a diverse group of Latin American nations, in their framing of economic development, sovereignty, and regional cooperation? This methodological approach allows for a nuanced comparison of how political discourse is strategically deployed to shape public opinion, policy outcomes, and regional cooperation in each case.

Moreover, case study research facilitates the examination of the interplay between political discourse, media narratives, and public opinion within these alliances. By focusing on specific instances of political discourse within the PA and V4, the research can uncover how leaders use language to position themselves on key regional issues and to influence both domestic and international perceptions of their alliances. The comparative nature of the case study approach enables the identification of similarities and differences in the discursive practices of the two alliances, as well as the external factors that shape these practices, such as the role of the EU and the USA in the V4's political discourse or the influence of trade relationships and external powers on the PA.

As the dependent variable, the Pacific Alliance and the Visegrad group success, will be explained through the discursive positions on policy areas placed in three dimensions: External boundary drawing, Socio-political governance and Attitudes pertaining to distribution, taken as the independent variables.

Most of the data collected will be qualitative data complemented by some quantitative data. Thus, the researcher's role in this study will be observer and discourse analyst. In qualitative research, the researcher functions as the primary instrument of analysis and serves as the field observer in direct engagement with the cases under study. (Gay, Mills & Arasian, 2009).

The timeline for this research includes the foundation of both integrations, however, the focus would be the pandemic and post-pandemic crisis between 2019 and 2023.

3.1.2 Case selection

Initially, the cases were chosen after the analysis of the literature on the definition and identification of regional integration actors, the examination of their press conferences, talks, webpages, Council of the Americas, joint statements, and summits.

The Visegrad Group (V4) is a Central European subregional cooperation mechanism formed during the democratic transitions of Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, and Slovakia. All four are members of NATO and the European Union, with a population of around 64 million and a GDP per capita of roughly €24,500. The V4 seeks to coordinate integration into the European framework, strengthen economic cooperation, and promote collaboration in energy, defense, and scientific fields (V4 facts and infographics, 2021).

The Visegrad group presents itself, as a bloc that has always shared the same cultural and intellectual values, as well as religious roots and traditions. V4 was not created as an alternative to the European Union, nor does it intend to go against joint efforts; on the contrary, its member states intend to carry out an optimal collaboration with their neighbors, while defending their values. Despite this definition, V4 has shown some mistrust towards the EU model of regional integration, limiting cooperation to those matters that involve a minimum cession of sovereignty. To illustrate this, Hungary, with the Hungarian forint (HUF), the RC, with the Czech koruna (CZK), and Poland, with the zloty (PLN), have decided to stay out of the common monetary policy.

The position of the V4 countries on relations with the Latin American region has not depended too much on the political orientation of the governing parties. Some continuity has been maintained regardless of changes in the forces in power. In this sense, its activity has been limited to reflecting on the evolution of international relations and detecting the opportunities emerging in Latin America, for example, establishing relations with the Pacific Alliance (Valladares & Calderon, 2019).

The Pacific Alliance is a regional integration mechanism formed by Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Peru, with a population of around 230 million inhabitants, a total area of 5,144,603 km²

and a GDP estimated in €16.253,31 per capita. Its three strategic objectives are: to build an area of deep integration with free movement of goods, services, capital and people; to promote the growth, development, and competitiveness of their economies to achieve greater well-being, overcome socioeconomic inequality, and promote the social inclusion of their inhabitants; and to become a platform for political articulation, economic and commercial integration, and projection to the world, with an emphasis on the Asia-Pacific region (Pacific Alliance, 2022).

The Pacific Alliance is the most recent open integration alliance in Latin America, which has meant many challenges for the future and, at the same time, has allowed it to learn from the mistakes of other integration processes that exist in the region. But the Alliance awakens at the same time positive and negative reactions, especially in the political issue. This happens because the economic model of the countries that integrate PA is oriented towards neoliberalism, and this has meant the opposition of countries like Brazil, as well as Venezuela and Bolivia; but at the same time, it has aroused the support of many countries interested in being part of this Alliance (Valladares & Calderon, 2019).

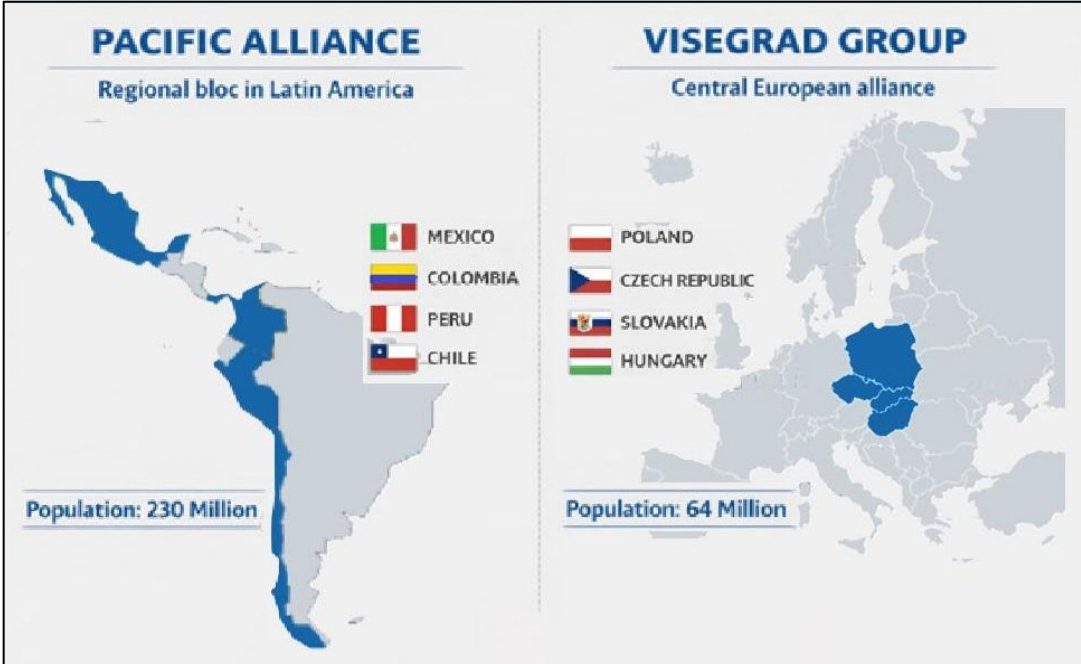
It is important to clarify that this research will not examine the neoliberal economic model or assess its merits or drawbacks. The focus is to analyze the PA from the perspective of political discourse, exploring how it functions as an integration process that is not only economic but also political and cultural, and how this discourse allows member states to position themselves within the broader global context.

The selection of cases for this research is also motivated by the interest in examining alternative regional integration mechanisms, specifically focusing on projects beyond the well-established and extensively studied models such as the European Union (EU) and MERCOSUR. The Pacific Alliance and the Visegrad Group both represent alternative regional integration models that operate outside the traditional frameworks of the European Union (EU) and MERCOSUR.

The EU-MERCOSUR bloc has been widely studied, and the mechanisms of integration within these groups are well-established in academic and policy discussions. However, less attention has been paid to integration models like PA and V4, which have emerged in distinct geopolitical, economic, and historical contexts. The PA, with its neoliberal economic approach, and the V4, with its more cautious stance on European integration, provide an opportunity to study how regional integration processes unfold in different settings.

To contextualize this comparison geographically, Figure 1 provides a visual representation of both regional groups, highlighting the member states of the Pacific Alliance in Latin America and the Visegrad Group in Central Europe. This spatial contrast illustrates the distinct regional environments in which each initiative operates, reinforcing their analytical value as non-traditional cases of regionalism.

Figure 1. Geographical Comparison of the Pacific Alliance and the Visegrad Group



Source: Author's own elaboration.

Regarding the drivers of regional integration, the Pacific Alliance and the Visegrad Group are both driven by a combination of economic, political, and cultural factors that influence their approach to regional cooperation. The PA, with its neoliberal economic model,

emphasizes market-driven integration, trade liberalization, and foreign investment as key components of its regional strategy. By contrast, the V4's approach to integration is characterized by a cautious stance toward the European Union, prioritizing national sovereignty and cultural identity while also seeking to strengthen regional cooperation within Central and Eastern Europe.

Another important aspect of the case selection is to examine how initial opposition on key issues can evolve into broader cooperation. Both the Pacific Alliance and the Visegrad Group have faced internal and external opposition, which has impacted their regional integration efforts.

For the Pacific Alliance, the opposition is largely ideological, with countries like Brazil, Venezuela, and Bolivia opposing the neoliberal economic model espoused by the PA members. This opposition has sparked debates within Latin America about the role of neoliberalism in regional cooperation and has highlighted the challenges of building a cohesive economic bloc with countries that have differing economic philosophies.

Similarly, the Visegrad Group has faced opposition from certain EU member states and has demonstrated skepticism toward EU policies, particularly in areas that require ceding sovereignty, such as the common monetary policy. Countries like Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic have opted out of adopting the euro, reflecting a broader mistrust toward deeper European integration. However, despite these differences, the V4 has managed to maintain cooperation on specific issues and has demonstrated a willingness to defend shared values related to sovereignty and cultural identity.

Despite their distinct geographical locations and political contexts, the PA and the V4 share some commonalities in terms of their approach to regional cooperation, economic goals, and political ideologies. Both groups have faced external pressures and internal challenges, but their experiences of navigating regional integration provide valuable insights into the broader dynamics of regional cooperation.

The bilateral relations between the PA and V4 could serve as an interesting area of exploration, particularly in the context of global geopolitics. Both groups are positioned within larger, competitive global systems, with the PA aligned with neoliberal economic policies, and the V4 adopting a more Eurosceptic stance.

3.1.3 Data Collection

Comparative case studies use both qualitative and quantitative methods and are fundamentally useful for understanding the influence of contexts (de Vaus, 2001). In the data gathering phase, data will be collected through previous studies, international surveys, databases, official government statistics, among others. Firstly, the cases will be described in contextual terms. Secondly, historical backgrounds, and thirdly, IMO, OSCE, Eurobarometer, Latin barometer databases will allow gathering information on positions towards different policy areas and the people's demands.

There will be conducted a comparison between supply and demand dimensions, in which patterns and categories will be analyzed through Discourse Analysis (DA) and policy area classification. By using secondary data from the European Social Survey (ESS), Latin barometer, Eurobarometer, CSES, Latin-American/East European statistics and the World Bank, the researcher will be able to make a context description of each case, identifying initial patterns to compare and examine changes in policy area positions and integration behavior. Furthermore, working with international databases, national surveys and party documents will allow making subgroup analysis.

Therefore, this thesis will analyze secondary data since it includes information that has been produced by organizations, both public and private, for a specific purpose, and data that has been provided and studied in other publications.

There are different advantages of using secondary data. First, it minimizes the effects that the researcher may cause in obtaining the information. Secondly, it reduces costs and time, as well as human and material resources. Thirdly, it facilitates comparative analysis and trends,

and it allows the formulation of many, and different questions related to the research problem (Bryman, 2012).

Processing of data

The grounded theory will be built with the support of computer and specialized software ATLAS TI 7.5.4. Hernández, Fernández and Baptista (2014) suggest this program in combination with discourse analyzer (DNA) allows segmenting data into meaning units; codify data (on both levels) and build theory (relate concepts and categories and themes).

Likewise, the type of sampling that will be carried out is theoretical sampling. Thus, the researcher will proceed with the structuring of the information through the elaboration of a semantic map, a table of codes and primary documents, which will allow the identification of the different categories of the codes.

Regarding the saturation criteria used for the elaboration of meanings, frequency is contemplated: it is the one that the greater the repetition of the code, the more relevant it becomes. Theoretical density refers to categories that are connected to multiple subcategories, while representativeness is demonstrated when the codes appear at least once within the documents (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2015).

There will be a focus on analyzing the Pacific Alliance and the Visegrad group policies, guidelines, agreements and projects. An initial delimitation will be established, following an assessment of primary and secondary documents, examining the operation and leadership within the alliances, as well as their role in the region, to determine if they constitute a discursive strategy to face current global challenges.

To carry out this analysis, the study will focus on several key methodological elements:

- Analysis unit: Text
- The observation unit: Documents from official sources, such as PA and V4 documentation, monographs, investigations, theses, opinion articles from newspapers or trustworthy academic journals.

- Documentary analysis: The set of operations intended to represent the content and form of a document to facilitate its consultation or retrieval, or even to generate a product that serves as a substitute (Clauso, 1993). Therefore, the documentary file will be used.
- Concept Category: Since this research has a qualitative nature, this method does not seek to produce formal theories, but rather to theorize about specific problems that may acquire a higher category to the extent that new studies are added. Thus, the variable category in this type of qualitative research model is called the conceptual category.

According to Carvalho, Luzia, Soares de Lima and Conceição (2009), conceptual categories allow the explanation of the phenomenon. So far, the research general conceptual categories guidelines are:

- The cooperation of the Pacific Alliance and the Visegrad Group.
- Discursive approach on domestic and foreign policies.
- Citizens' positions.
- Political leaders' discourses.

Data analysis

The analysis of the data will be conducted based on deductive reasoning. It involves working from an existing theory, in this case regional integration, Demand-Supply and Policy area dimensions theories, then testing if the claims can be confirmed. In this process the reasoning starts from one or more statements to reach a conclusion. Deduction connects the premises with the conclusions. After the analysis, it would then either confirm or disconfirm the hypotheses (Hansen & Klemmesen, 2012).

To validate the initial hypotheses of this study, the analysis examines how political discourse within the Visegrad Group and the Pacific Alliance, particularly in relation to power dynamics, framing strategies, citizen perceptions, and external influences, shapes their

approaches to external boundary construction, socio-political governance, and distributional preferences. The study first identifies recurring discursive patterns and strategic narratives, which are subsequently tested against empirical observations derived from official documents of both alliances to assess their impact on integration outcomes.

Different categories are expected to emerge from demand and supply sides which will be discussed and in the last stage of the analysis a comparison will be carried out among the similarities and differences found behind the V4 and PA discursive practices.

Typical case sampling strategy will allow us to avoid generalized statements about the experiences of all cases (Patton, 2002). It allows to identify not only, “reflexive positioning”, in which identity claims are accepted by their interlocutors, but also “interactive positioning”, in which identities are assigned by interlocutors (Davies & Harre, 1990).

Discourse analysis understands discourses primarily as forms of knowledge structuring experiences which determine power relations. To unveil those discursive practices, Baxter (2003) proposes a layered analysis that includes a microanalytic descriptive level (denotative) and an interpretative level (connotative). The descriptive analysis could be developed in a number of “prototypical approaches” in Baxter's words (2003, p. 49) “to foreground and pinpoint the moment (or series of moments) when speakers negotiate their shifting subject positions.”

However, at this descriptive level the researcher will not concentrate exclusively on the spoken words, non-verbal communication will be analyzed as well. Then, it will be fundamental to interpret why specific subject and group positioning occurs, drawing on the evidence at the microanalytic level. Baxter (2003) conceives of alternative pathways in this level by engaging multiple voices and viewpoints. These seek to make relevant those voices who have not been heard “where competing discourses in a given setting seem to lead (temporarily) to more fixed patterns of dominant and subordinated subject positions” (Baxter, 2003, p. 71). In this level it will be explored how specific discourses are constructed and contested.

Through these categories and subcategories, the aim is to interpret discursive productions of selves in public discussions, since understanding of positioning involves the analysis of discursive practices (Davis & Harré, 1990).

There are several connotations in the examination of alliances in LA and EU. First of all, by espousing a democratic discourse and rejecting any attack against civil liberties, alliances are able to change attitudes and postures towards different policy issues adapting to any social, political and economic scenario. Alliances' strategies, organizational abilities and leadership will keep influencing their performance, their success will also be driven by contextual elements at state level (Valladares & Calderon, 2019).

Regarding the limitations, it is important to recognize that relying on secondary data presents specific challenges for the researcher. These include verifying the validity and reliability of sources and reviewing several elements, such as the consistency of the information, the sample design, the data collection techniques, the number of responses obtained, the date of data collection, and the concepts used along with their operationalization (Patton, 2002).

As for this research, the main limitation is that, although the analysis of the two cases allows us to compare the explanations behind the success of regional alliances, it does not permit to make general conclusions regarding the overall context, namely, Latin America and the European Union. Additionally, there is not enough information to establish if the databases Latinbarometer and Eurobarometer used the same methods, instruments, and analysis techniques to interpret the data.

Furthermore, issues related to the rise of political instability, such as immigration, lack of trust in national governments or economic crisis, seem to be expected to remain significant in political sphere. As stated by Acosta (2013) these factors will contribute to the prolonged presence of regional alliances on the global scenario will provide them with a broad impact on local societies, increased by the sophistication of their discourses. This could have an

impact on the formulation of policies by introducing new issues to the traditional political agendas and change social postures towards them.

3.1.4 Research criteria

Following Lincoln and Guba's (1990) framework for evaluating qualitative research, the study aligns internal validity with credibility, external validity with transferability, reliability with dependability, and objectivity with confirmability. In this context, credibility is addressed through the purposeful selection of cases, a strategy outlined in the case description that strengthens the study's trustworthiness (Merriam, 1998).

The research draws its validity and reliability from various data collection tools, including databases, international surveys, and indicators. These instruments provide second-order data reflecting the actions and perspectives of alliances.

Additionally, the study employs methodological triangulation to identify recurring patterns and categories, which are then analyzed using Discourse Analysis (Baxter, 2003) and positioning theory (Davies & Harré, 1990). This approach allows for a deeper understanding of how leaders perceive and interact with other states, particularly in relation to potential differences that arise during their engagements.

4. CHAPTER IV: DATA COLLECTION

This chapter addresses the discourses, narratives, and discursive strategies that underpin the policies of the Pacific Alliance and the Visegrad Four. By examining the discursive aspects, the aim is to uncover the ideologies, interests, and power dynamics that drive these policies, as well as the effects they have on member states and the broader international community. Furthermore, this analysis will explore how these regional cooperation groups navigate the complexities of regional politics, global interdependence, and public opinion in their pursuance of effective collaboration and policy implementation.

Through this in-depth analysis, the researcher seeks to identify the motivations, challenges, and implications of the policies enacted by the Pacific Alliance and the Visegrad Four. By doing so, the researcher gains a deeper understanding of the evolving landscape of international relations and the role that these regional organizations play in fostering cooperation, stability, and development within their respective regions and beyond.

4.1 Data Collection Framework

The data collection phase for political discourse analysis in regional integration alliances has included gathering a range of texts, such as speeches, policy documents, media news, interviews, and official statements from political actors within the Pacific Alliance and the Visegrad Group. According to Rau, Elliker, Florian and Coetzee (2018), the following steps are involved in collecting data for discourse analysis:

- Defining the scope: The study is limited to specific regional integration alliances: the Visegrad Group and the Pacific Alliance.
- Identifying relevant sources: Searching online archives of speeches, policy documents, and other sources of public discourse, as well as surveys showing citizens' views on integration.

- Establishing inclusion criteria: Determine date of the document, the author of the document, and the relevance of the document to the research questions.
- Systematic sampling: stratified sampling approach to select documents or interviews/speeches for analysis.
- Data management: creating a database or spreadsheet that includes information about each document or interview.

To collect the data and analyze the discursively political positions towards national and international policies that have been taken by the Pacific Alliance and the Visegrad Group, the following dimensions are proposed seeking to answer the research questions and test the different hypotheses as table 1. shows:

Table 1. Data collection dimensions

Research questions + Hypotheses	Data collection dimensions	Data
<p>1. How has political discourse in PA and V4 shaped regional integration efforts over the last 5 years?</p> <p><i>H1: Political discourse within PA and V4 is mostly shaped by power dynamics, rather than cultural links or language and historical context, which influence policy formulation.</i></p>	Historical	Account between 2019 and 2023
<p>2. What are the patterns, similarities and differences of communication and discursive dynamics among PA and V4 member states, and what factors contribute to these variations?</p> <p><i>H2: Political discourse (joint declarations create momentum) within PA and V4 can create both opportunities and challenges for regional integration efforts, as it can facilitate more than hinder the development of common policies, norms, and institutions.</i></p>	Cooperation	Joint initiatives Regional Integration Goals

<p>5. How do political actors use discourse to influence decision-making processes and policy formulation?</p> <p><i>H3: PA and V4 Political leaders rely primarily on framing as a discursive strategy to shape perceptions, influence opinions, and advance their interests in decision-making.</i></p>	<p>Political leaders' side</p>	<p>Presidents and Prime ministers' discourses</p>
<p>6. What are the dominant narratives and discourses surrounding regional integration alliances in citizens' opinions, and how do they impact public support or opposition?</p> <p><i>H4: Citizen's perceptions towards PA and V4 play a crucial role in constructing and reinforcing collective identity, values, and norms of the alliances, which can impact cohesion, legitimacy, and effectiveness.</i></p>	<p>Population side</p>	<p>Citizen's opinions</p>
<p>7. How have the world powers' discourses on recent global crises impacted PA and V4 integrations?</p> <p><i>H5: Communication patterns and discursive interactions among member states within PA and V4 vary, influenced by external actors such as the EU and the USA, which can affect alliance outcomes and dynamics.</i></p>	<p>External influence</p>	<p>EU and USA, among other external discourses</p>

Note. Author's own elaboration.

By considering these dimensions, the researcher can conduct a comparative study of the Pacific Alliance and the Visegrad Group. This structured framework allows for a deeper exploration of the historical roots, integration goals, leadership dynamics, public sentiment, and external contextual factors that collectively shape these regional organizations. The data dimensions can be defined as follows:

Historical data

It refers to examining the historical context and background of each group. This includes the historical events and developments that have influenced the evolution of the Pacific Alliance and the Visegrad Group from 2019 to 2023. Understanding the historical context is crucial for identifying the roots and initial goals of each group. It helps trace the progress of their missions and objectives.

Cooperation data

This dimension focuses on the common policies, norms, and institutions the Pacific Alliance and the Visegrad Group aim to establish within their respective regions. The researcher assesses the specific goals, strategies, and mechanisms employed to foster economic, political, and social integration among member states.

Political Leaders' Side

The political leaders' side dimension concentrates on the role of political leaders within regional integration efforts. It presents the decisions, policies, and strategies adopted by political leaders to advance the interests of their respective regional organizations. This dimension provides an overview of the influence of these leaders on the direction and effectiveness of the Pacific Alliance and the Visegrad Group.

Population Side

This dimension explores the perceptions of the citizens residing in the regions represented by the Pacific Alliance and the Visegrad Group. It involves an analysis of public opinion. The researcher investigates how the general population views these organizations and how their activities impact the daily lives of people in the region. Understanding how the population views these organizations and their impact is important for assessing their legitimacy and long-term sustainability.

External Influence

The External Influence dimension focuses on the role of external actors and forces in shaping the dynamics of the Pacific Alliance and the Visegrad Group. This can include the influence of global powers, international organizations, neighbouring countries, or other external stakeholders. Analyzing how external actors impact the strategies and policies of these regional organizations is important to acknowledge the broader geopolitical context in which they operate.

These dimensions collectively provide a framework for comparing the Pacific Alliance and the Visegrad Group, taking into account their historical foundation, goals, leadership dynamics, public perception, and external contextual factors that build their regional roles.

4.2 Historical Data

Latin America and Europe have each experienced a series of regional challenges between 2019 and 2023, impacting their political, economic, and social landscapes.

In the first case, Latin American political instability and protests marked a significant crisis, with widespread demonstrations fuelled by concerns over government corruption, economic inequality, and inadequate public services. Economic difficulties, including high inflation and unemployment, were prevalent, exacerbated by the economic impact of the pandemic. High levels of violence and crime, particularly in the Northern Triangle countries, continued to pose security threats. Latin America also faced migration and refugee crises, with some countries serving as emigration sources and transit regions for migrants (Riggirozzi, Grugel & Cintra, 2020). Besides these, the COVID-19 pandemic presented severe healthcare and economic challenges in the region.

Meanwhile in Europe, the United Kingdom's decision to leave the European Union (Brexit) posed a profound challenge, influencing trade, economic relations, and the future of EU-UK cooperation. The COVID-19 pandemic, alongside migration and refugee crises, troubled healthcare systems and led to complex policy responses. Environmental concerns, such as climate change and the transition to sustainable energy sources, came to the forefront. In

addition, political divisions and issues related to the rule of law and democracy further complicated the regional landscape (Guth & Nelsen, 2021).

Although these regions have faced different regional challenges, the common threads of political and economic uncertainty, the impacts of the pandemic, and the importance of climate and environmental issues run through both Europe and Latin America, as it can be seen in the table 2:

Table 2. LATAM and Europe challenges from 2019 to 2023.

Year	LATAM	Europe
2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="354 751 891 842">– Jair Bolsonaro assumes presidential office in Brazil. <li data-bbox="354 877 891 1024">– Venezuela’s National Assembly head Juan Guaido declares himself the interim president of the country. <li data-bbox="354 1060 891 1150">– A total of 72,843 forest fires occur in Brazil. <li data-bbox="354 1186 891 1388">– Ecuador’s president temporarily moves government operations from the capital Quito to the western port city of Guayaquil. <li data-bbox="354 1423 891 1570">– Mexican drug lord Joaquin “El Chapo” Guzman’s son, Ovidio, escapes from arrest. <li data-bbox="354 1606 891 1801">– A state of emergency is declared in Chile’s capital, Santiago, after demonstrations against a rise in metro fares. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="914 751 1451 842">– Heavy winter storms paralyze parts of Scandinavia and the Alps. <li data-bbox="914 877 1451 1192">– Refusal to allow boats to dock and legal actions against NGOs carrying out rescues along with agreements with countries like Libya and Turkey to prevent migrants from leaving for Europe. <li data-bbox="914 1228 1451 1423">– Nine of the twelve accused Catalan independence movement leaders receive prison sentences for the crimes of sedition. <li data-bbox="914 1459 1451 1661">– The absolute victory of Boris Johnson's party, which practically leads to the departure of the United Kingdom from the European Union. <li data-bbox="914 1696 1451 1787">– Protests in France and the yellow vest movement.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bolivia's former leader Evo Morales arrives in Argentina where he is granted asylum. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The approval of Ukraine aspiration to join NATO. - Volodymyr Zelensky is elected president of Ukraine.
2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Protests in Colombia. - First case Covid-19 Pandemic in Brazil. - Stock markets fall. - Ecuador former president Rafael Correa is sentenced to 8 years in prison. - Avianca and Latam airlines declared bankrupt. - Telegramgate and protests in Puerto Rico. - Chile referendum. - Peru impeaches President Vizcarra. - Abortion legalization in Argentina. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - COVID-19 pandemic triggers a major public health emergency and economic slowdown. - The UK leaves the EU after 47 years of membership. - France experiences seven terror attacks. - Disputed presidential elections in Belarus. - The call for racial justice is keenly felt in Belgium, with the country being forced to take stock of its colonial legacy and the imperialist atrocities committed. - Spain launches a new initiative: a Minimum Living Income scheme.
2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Brazil begins vaccination with two million doses of Oxford-AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine made in India. - Peru sends troops to its border with Ecuador to impede immigration, principally from Venezuela. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The European Union starts the vaccination campaigns at the beginning of 2021 but suffers a shortage of doses. - The European Union sets its goal of reducing emissions by 55% in 2030

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Protests in Colombia, Cuba and Mexico against tax reforms and failing economy – Haiti President Jovenel Moïse killed. – Pedro Castillo is elected Peru’s president. – The drought that affects the Paraná River. – Nicaragua reelected President Daniel Ortega. – Gabriel Boric is elected president in Chile. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> and achieving climate neutrality in 2050 as a legal obligation. – Agreement on the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). – Historic change at the head of the German Government, with the departure of Angela Merkel after 16 years serving as chancellor.
2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Chile says no to new constitution. – Peru’s president impeached and arrested. – Colombia elects first leftist leader. – El Salvador gang crackdown. – Argentina VP survives assassination attempt. – Surge in Darien gap (Panama) crossings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Extreme heatwaves hitting much of Europe. – Russia invades Ukraine, humanitarian crises deepen. – Inflation returns. – Energy crisis.
2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva is reelected in Brazil. – Bolivia also witnesses scenes of chaos since truckers block roads 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Croatia adopts the euro and becomes the 20th member state of the eurozone.

	<p>following the expulsion of Evo Morales.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – In Peru, protests continue. – Pedro Castillo's attempt to close the congress is stopped and Vice President Dina Boluarte assumes the presidency following his arrest. – Colombian President Gustavo Petro continues to face profound difficulties in establishing a real, long-lasting ceasefire with guerrilla groups. – Haiti: Gang violence targeting civilians intensifies in Ouest and Artibonite departments. – Deadly violence in Mexico as criminal groups seek to control trafficking routes – Political leader is assassinated in Ecuador ahead of presidential elections. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Polish parliamentary election for the Parliament of Poland. – Spanish general election for the Cortes Generales. – Slovakian, Bulgarian elections. – Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI dead.
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Note: Author's compilation based on data from ACLED (2023) for Latin America and the Caribbean and from Boundless World History and Euronews (Crowcroft & Bauomy, 2019) for Europe.

The global and regional challenges above continue to drive the progress and trajectories of LATAM and the EU, demonstrating the complex nature of regional dynamics on the world stage. On the one hand, some countries in Latin America have seen positive political change.

For instance, democratic transitions occurred in countries like Argentina and Bolivia, which aimed to address long-standing issues of corruption and inequality (Muñoz-Chirinos, 2021).

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, some Latin American nations experienced periods of economic growth and development. Countries like Chile, Peru and Colombia made significant strides in fostering economic stability and diversification (Allin, Haldane, Victoria et al., 2020).

Moreover, Latin American countries have increasingly engaged in regional and international cooperation, as seen through the creation of mechanisms like the Pacific Alliance and CELAC. These platforms originally aimed to strengthen trade, diplomatic, and political ties among member states.

On the other hand, Europe navigated the complexities of its post-Brexit relationship with the United Kingdom. Negotiations led to agreements on trade and cooperation, marking a significant milestone in clarifying their future ties.

European nations joined forces to combat the COVID-19 pandemic, showcasing their ability to cooperate during crises. The development and distribution of vaccines, as well as economic stimulus packages, demonstrated solidarity among EU member states. The region made substantial progress in its commitment to environmental sustainability. The European Green Deal and efforts to transition to renewable energy sources underlined a strong dedication to addressing climate change (Hametner, Markus, Kostetckaia, et al., 2022)

It is important to note that these regions also continued to face ongoing challenges and that the progress achieved has not been uniform across all countries. The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in significant obstacles to economic growth and public health in both regions. Nevertheless, the period has seen notable efforts and developments in addressing pressing issues and fostering cooperation within Latin America and Europe.

Collecting the regional contextual data allows us to see a broader picture of both the Pacific Alliance and the Visegrad Group. Since the researcher's case selection criteria were based on the interest to examine alternative regional organizations to EU-MERCOSUR, it is fundamental to explore their key drivers, to analyze how regional organizations align on

topics opposing other regional interests, for example, the pro-neoliberal positions within LATAM and the so-called Euroscepticism in the EU. Besides this, it is relevant to identify what factors could enable wider cooperation and how regional integration goes from functional to more multidimensional cooperation that leads to bilateral relations between both alliances. In order to achieve the previous research goals a description of the PA and V4 profiles is presented.

Pacific Alliance

The PA is the most recent open integration formation in Latin America, which has meant many challenges for the future and, at the same time, has allowed it to learn from the mistakes of other integration processes that exist in the region. But the Alliance awakens at the same time positive and negative reactions, especially in the political sense. This happens because the economic model of the countries that integrate PA is oriented towards neoliberalism, and this has meant the opposition of countries like Brazil, as well as Venezuela and Bolivia, but at the same time, it has gained the support of many countries interested in being part of this Alliance (Valladares & Calderón, 2019).

Economic Data

The Pacific Alliance is the eighth economic power and the eighth export force worldwide. In Latin America and the Caribbean, this bloc of countries represents 38% of the GDP, 50% of total trade of the region and attracts 45% of Foreign Direct Investment.

As reported by information from the Observatory of Economic Complexity (OEC), the Pacific Alliance (PA) registered exports amounting to \$669 billion in 2019, constituting 3.18% of the global export market. Simultaneously, its imports reached \$654 billion, making up 3.11% of the global import share. Mexico played a prominent role as the primary exporter within the alliance, contributing \$474 billion, equivalent to 70.8% of the combined exports. Conversely, Mexico also took the lead as the primary importer, with imports valued at \$459 billion, accounting for 70.1% of the total imports for the Pacific Alliance (Observatory of Economic Complexity, 2019).

In the subsequent year, 2021, OEC data indicated that the major export destinations for the PA were the United States (\$395 billion), China (\$67.7 billion), Canada (\$22.2 billion), Japan (\$14.9 billion), and South Korea (\$14.7 billion). Regarding imports during the same period, the primary sources for the Pacific Alliance were the United States (\$286 billion), China (\$140 billion), Germany (\$21.9 billion), Brazil (\$19.3 billion), and South Korea (\$15.9 billion) (Observatory of Economic Complexity, 2021).

In 2024, the Pacific Alliance recorded total exports of \$878 billion, accounting for 3.84% of global exports and marking a 4.78% increase from the previous year, with a five-year compound annual growth rate of 6.5%. Mexico was the dominant exporter, contributing \$651 billion, or 74.1% of the PA's total. Key export destinations included the United States, China, and Canada, while the top exported products were cars, computers, and copper ore (Observatory of Economic Complexity, 2024).

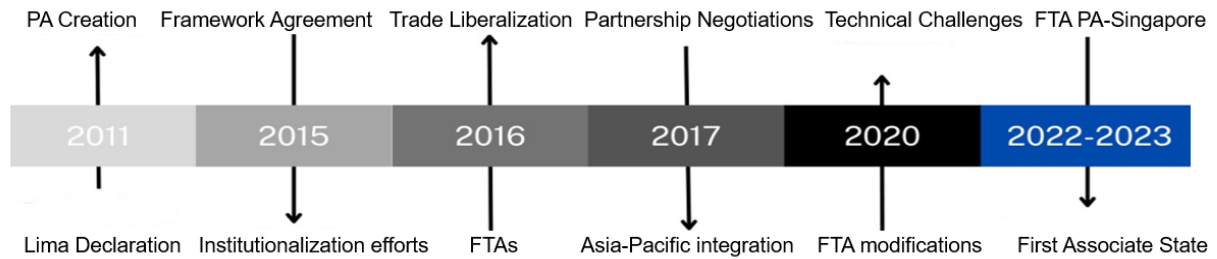
Imports for the same year calculated \$759 billion, representing 3.32% of global imports and a 1.58% rise from 2023, with a five-year growth rate of 6.2%. Mexico led imports with \$561 billion, or 73.8% of the bloc's total, sourcing primarily from the United States, China, and Germany. The main imported products were refined petroleum, motor vehicles and parts, and telephones (Observatory of Economic Complexity, 2024).

Political data

From a political point of view the Pacific Alliance holds a vision that is integral to its objectives and operations. Member countries share common values such as democracy, market-oriented economic policies, and respect for human rights. These shared values underpin their political cooperation and form the basis for their regional and international dynamics.

PA member countries engage in ongoing political dialogue to address common challenges, share perspectives on regional and global issues, and foster mutual understanding. Graph 1 shows PA evolution since 2011 at various levels, including high-level summits, ministerial meetings, and working groups.

Graph 1. Pacific Alliance progress timeline



Source: Author's compilation based on ABC: The Pacific Alliance (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de Colombia, 2014).

The PA provides a platform for its member countries to coordinate and collaborate on regional and global political matters. By working together, they can enhance their influence and diplomatic efforts on the international stage. This has been particularly important in addressing issues such as trade negotiations and climate change agreements (Pacific Alliance, 2012).

The member countries often coordinate their positions on international matters, including those within organizations like the Organization of American States (OAS) and other regional forums. This alignment can amplify their collective impact and make their voices more influential in global affairs. This includes collaborating on issues like security, migration, and diplomatic relations.

The alliance aims to contribute to regional stability by providing a framework for peaceful conflict resolution, thereby reducing the potential for inter-state disputes. This is essential for maintaining a conducive environment for economic growth and development.

The Pacific Alliance promotes democratic governance as a fundamental principle, aiming to strengthen democratic institutions and practices within its member states and encouraging these principles in the wider Latin American region.

While the primary focus of the Pacific Alliance is economic integration, its political dimension is significant in shaping the alliance's influence on the global stage, fostering regional stability, and promoting shared values and interests. Political collaboration is vital

for achieving the alliance's overarching goals, and it emphasizes the importance of balancing economic and political objectives in pursuit of regional cooperation.

Visegrad Group

The Visegrad group's key aims include supporting the integration of its members into the broader European community, developing mechanisms for economic collaboration to boost regional growth, and fostering joint efforts in areas such as energy, defense, and scientific research (Visegrad group, 1991).

The Visegrad Four (V4) was not established as an alternative to the European Union, nor does it oppose collective European initiatives. On the contrary, its member states seek to collaborate effectively with their neighbors while upholding their own values. However, despite this stated intent, the V4 has demonstrated a certain level of skepticism toward the EU's model of regional integration, often restricting cooperation to areas that require minimal surrender of national sovereignty. For example, Hungary (using the Hungarian forint), the Czech Republic (with the Czech koruna), and Poland (with the zloty) have thus far opted not to adopt the euro, remaining outside the EU's common monetary policy framework.

Economic data

Currently with a rise in political participation, the V4 region has demonstrated noteworthy economic achievements over the last decade. This includes impressive growth, improved employment rates, fiscal responsibility, and trade advancements, along with a rapid recovery from the challenges posed by the COVID crisis.

The V4 countries combined would constitute the 5th largest economy in Europe and the 12th in the world. Since 2013, GDP growth in the V4 has consistently exceeded the EU average on an annual basis. Before the war in Ukraine, the European Commission's Winter 2022 Economic Forecast estimated that the V4 region's average GDP growth in 2022 (5.0%) would, again, exceed the EU average (4.0%) (Hungary's 2021/22 Presidency of the Visegrad Group).

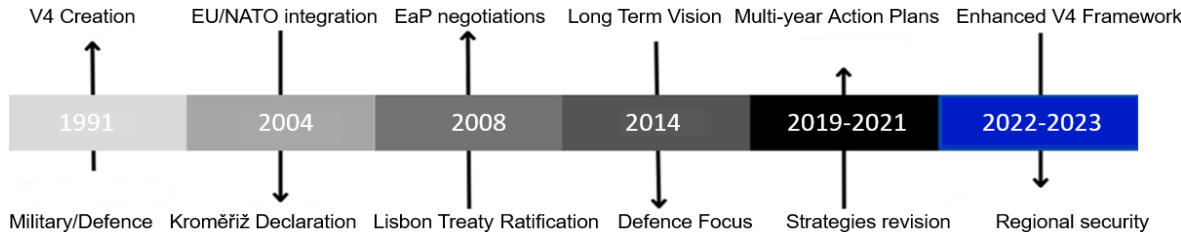
The Visegrad region plays a crucial role in European trade, particularly due to the substantial volume of trade between the V4 and Germany, which reached \$335.3 billion in 2021. This figure significantly surpasses Germany's trade with France (\$164.5 billion), as well as its trade with China (\$245.4 billion) and the USA (\$194 billion) (Hungary’s 2021/22 Presidency of the Visegrad Group).

Additionally, the progressively developing economic ties within the V4 countries are of equal significance. When considered as a group, the V4 ranks among the top three trading partners for each Visegrad country. Trade flows among V4 nations witnessed an average increase of 64% between 2010 and 2020. In terms of investments, nearly all Visegrad countries are listed among the top 10 investment destinations for each V4 partner (Hungary’s 2021/22 Presidency of the Visegrad Group).

Political Data

The political dimension of the Visegrad Four involves various aspects of political cooperation, dialogue, and collaboration among these member states. The Visegrad Group was formed in 1991, shortly after the end of the Cold War, with the aim of fostering cooperation and supporting each other's efforts toward European integration as graph 2 illustrates (Visegrad Group, 1991):

Graph 2. Visegrad Group progress timeline.



Source: Author’s compilation based on Visegrad Group, (n.d) data.

The V4 countries share common historical, cultural, and geopolitical backgrounds, and they often align on certain values and objectives. These shared elements contribute to a political unity that facilitates joint initiatives and collaboration. Understanding the historical context of its formation is essential for analyzing the political dynamics within the group.

One of the primary political dimensions of the V4 is its commitment to regional cooperation and integration. The member states work together on issues related to regional security, economic development, and cultural exchange. While each member state has its own national interests, the V4 provides a platform for these countries to present a united front on various EU-related issues, such as institutional reforms or policies.

Regular political consultations and high-level summits are held among the V4 countries to discuss common challenges, exchange views on international affairs, and coordinate positions on political issues of regional or global significance.

The V4 has demonstrated a commitment to mutual assistance and solidarity during times of crisis. This was particularly evident in responses to events such as the refugee crisis and regional security challenges. This can involve joint military exercises, intelligence sharing, and coordination on defence policies. In addition, the V4 engages in political dialogue with neighbouring countries, both within and outside the EU, to promote stability and cooperation in the broader Central European region.

The political dimension of the Visegrad Four is layered, reflecting both the individual interests of each member state and the collective pursuit of shared goals. It provides a platform for political collaboration, dialogue, and joint action in addressing common challenges and shaping the political landscape of Central Eastern Europe.

4.3 Cooperation Data

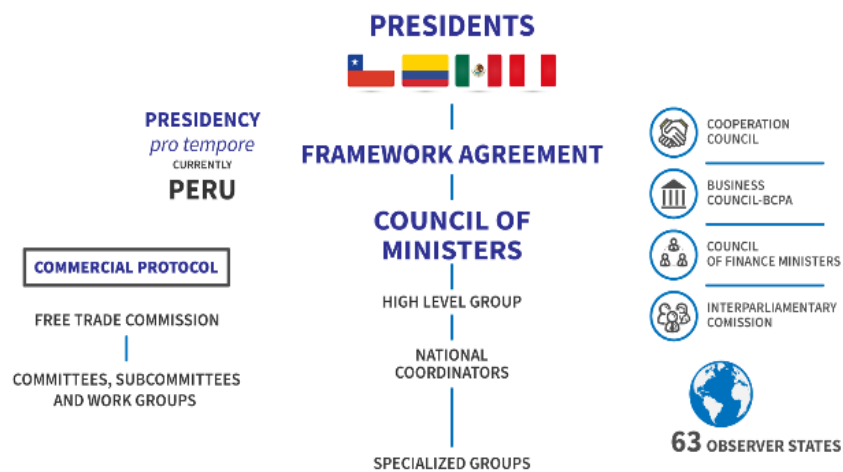
This section provides a detailed examination of the collaborative efforts, agreements, and interactions within the Pacific Alliance (PA) and the Visegrad Group (V4). By collecting cooperation data, the aim is to identify the dynamics that bind member states together and explore the mechanisms through which shared objectives are pursued. Key Elements to examine are institutional framework, bilateral and multilateral agreements, policy harmonization, joint projects, challenges, and achievements.

Pacific Alliance

Data from the OAS Foreign Trade Information System (SICE) (2011) indicates that the Pacific Alliance institutional framework was legally constituted on June 6, 2012, with the signing of the integration Agreement. The Presidents of the four countries are, in practice, the highest decision-making body of the process; they meet on an ad hoc basis in so-called Summits. The Council of Ministers, made up of the Ministers of Foreign Trade and Foreign Affairs, has among its powers to adopt decisions that develop the objectives and specific actions provided for in the Framework Agreement, as well as in the presidential declarations of the Pacific Alliance.

The High-Level Group (GAN), made up of the Vice Ministers of Foreign Trade and Foreign Affairs, is in charge of supervising the progress of the technical groups, evaluating the areas in which progress can be made and preparing a proposal for the projection and external approach with other regional organizations or groups, especially from the Asia Pacific region. The technical groups and subgroups are formed by public servants from the four member countries, whose function is to negotiate disciplines related to the issues of the Pacific Alliance. It was also defined that the Pro-Tempore Presidency (Graph 3) of the Alliance is exercised by each of the member countries, in alphabetical order, for annual periods.

Graph 3. PA Organization chart



Source: Taken from <https://alianzapacifico.net/en/organization-chart-and-objectives/>

The Pacific Alliance has focused on fostering cooperation and integration in several key areas. Foreign Trade Information System (SICE) (2011) suggests the main cooperation areas include:

- **Economic integration:** The alliance promotes investment opportunities, encourages foreign direct investment (FDI), and aims to enhance the business climate for investors.
- **Entrepreneurship and Innovation:** The alliance supports entrepreneurship and innovation as a means to drive economic growth. Initiatives include promoting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), encouraging innovation, and fostering a culture of entrepreneurship. For example, PA countries collaborate to boost tourism in the region. This includes initiatives to facilitate travel, tourism promotion, and coordination on tourism-related policies.
- **Educational and Cultural Exchange:** The Pacific Alliance encourages academic and cultural cooperation among member countries. This includes student exchanges, cultural events, and academic collaboration.
- **Environmental Cooperation:** Environmental sustainability is a priority for the alliance. Member countries work together to address environmental challenges, such as climate change, conservation, and the responsible use of natural resources. The PA also promotes infrastructure development to facilitate transportation and connectivity within the region, enhancing trade and economic cooperation.
- **Social Inclusion:** The alliance is committed to promoting social inclusion and reducing inequalities in the member countries. Initiatives in this area include programs to address poverty, improve access to healthcare and education, and empower marginalized communities.

These cooperation areas reflect the multidimensional approach of the Pacific Alliance to addressing economic, social, and environmental challenges and opportunities in the region. The alliance's commitment to integration and cooperation has the potential to drive economic growth, enhance regional stability, and improve the quality of life for its citizens. To achieve these goals the PA has signed the following agreements:

Table 3. Bilateral and Multilateral Agreements (excerpts).

Bilateral/ Multilateral Agreements	Framework	Areas of cooperation
<p>Pacific Alliance and MERCOSUR</p>	<p>In 2018, the first summit between the Pacific Alliance and MERCOSUR was held in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, an opportunity that brought together the presidents of Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and Peru, representing the Pacific Alliance, and the presidents and representatives of Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay, on behalf of MERCOSUR.</p> <p>The Summit between the two cases, was held within the framework of the XIII Summit of the Pacific Alliance and culminated with the signing of the Presidential Statement of the countries of the Pacific Alliance and MERCOSUR, which reaffirmed the commitment to further advance towards their integration.</p> <p>This Joint Declaration establishes the decision of both alliances to continue advancing and deepening the integration process between both Parties, through the implementation of an Action Plan, to complement and expand the existing Road</p>	<p>Non-tariff barriers.</p> <p>Trade facilitation.</p> <p>Global value chains and cumulation of origin.</p> <p>Regulatory cooperation.</p> <p>Trade promotion and MSMEs.</p> <p>Trade facilitation in services.</p> <p>Digital agenda.</p> <p>Inclusive trade and gender.</p> <p>Exchange of experiences in academic mobility.</p> <p>Tourism.</p> <p>Culture.</p> <p>Mobility of people.</p>

	<p>Map between the Pacific Alliance and MERCOSUR.</p> <p>It also reaffirms its interest in strengthening cooperation ties and promoting economic and trade relations in areas of common interest, with the aim of advancing regional integration, considering global opportunities and challenges.</p>	
Pacific Alliance - European Union	<p>The Pacific Alliance and the European Union have been working together since 2015 to strengthen their relationship and achieve their goal of attaining the free movement of people, goods, services, and capital.</p> <p>In 2019, the Pacific Alliance and the European Union (EU) signed a Joint Declaration to strengthen cooperation on environmental issues, science and technology and innovation, as well as to support SMEs.</p>	<p>Aspects related to regional economic integration and business climate.</p> <p>Financial integration.</p> <p>Regional development.</p> <p>Education and student mobility.</p> <p>Movement of people.</p> <p>Digital strategies.</p> <p>Small and medium-sized enterprises.</p> <p>Climate, environment and green growth.</p> <p>Innovation, science and technology.</p>
Pacific Alliance - Association of Southeast	<p>After adopting the ASEAN-Pacific Alliance Framework for Cooperation during the III Ministerial Meeting, held on September 24, 2016, the PA and ASEAN remain</p>	<p>The five pillars of the Work Plan are: economic cooperation, education and people-to-people contact,</p>

<p>Asian Nations ASEAN</p>	<p>committed to improve the economic and trade ties between the two blocs and to explore greater cooperation through the development of a new ASEAN-Pacific Alliance Work Plan 2021-2025, which includes areas such as the Fourth Industrial Revolution; Trade and Investment; SMEs; Education; Science, Technology and Innovation; Digital Economy; Gender and Sustainable Development.</p> <p>The Pacific Alliance and ASEAN have expressed since 2014 their commitment to forging stronger links between the two regional mechanisms.</p>	<p>science, technology, and innovation, as well as smart cities and connectivity, environment and sustainable development, and cooperation in post-pandemic economic recovery.</p>
<p>Pacific Alliance - Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC)</p>	<p>Within the framework of the XIV Summit of the Pacific Alliance held in July 2019 in Lima, Peru, the Declaration on the Association between the Eurasian Economic Commission, and the States Parties to the Pacific Alliance Framework Agreement was signed.</p>	<p>Economic integration and trade facilitation, as well as promoting contacts between the business communities of the member states of the Commission and the member states of the Pacific Alliance.</p>

Pacific Alliance - Singapore	<p>Within the framework of the XVI Summit of Presidents of the Pacific Alliance, held on January 26th, 2022, in Bahía Málaga-Buenaventura, Colombia, the Ministers of Foreign Trade of Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Peru and the Minister of Foreign Trade of Singapore signed the Free Trade Agreement.</p> <p>The signing of this agreement marks a milestone for this integration initiative because Singapore becomes the first Partner State of the Pacific Alliance.</p>	Investment, trade and tourism, digital economy, trade facilitation measures, culture, economy/inclusive growth, among others.
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Source: Excerpts taken from <https://alianzapacifico.net/en/#>

PA challenges between 2019-2023

During the last decade, the Pacific Alliance member countries have been affected by global economic uncertainties, including trade tensions and fluctuations in commodity prices. Besides this, the member countries have diverse economies with varying levels of development, which creates challenges in coordinating policies and priorities. As the geopolitical and economic landscape can evolve rapidly, balancing economic growth with environmental conservation and adopting sustainable practices have become priority for the PA (García, 2020).

Also, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted trade, supply chains, and economic activities, leading to economic contractions and increased public health expenditures. Coordinating a regional response to the health crisis and its economic fallout was a shared challenge.

Some member countries faced periods of political instability and social unrest during the specified timeframe. Political changes and domestic challenges could impact on the alliance's ability to pursue its objectives and maintain a unified approach to regional issues.

Addressing infrastructure gaps and improving connectivity within the alliance remained a challenge. Enhancing transportation links, energy infrastructure, and digital connectivity were important for promoting economic development and regional integration.

Visegrad Four

The Visegrad Cooperation is not institutionalized in any manner. It is based solely on the principle of periodical meetings of its representatives at various levels (from the high-level meetings of prime ministers and heads of states to expert consultations). Official summits of V4 prime ministers take place on an annual basis. Between these summits, one of the V4 countries holds presidency, part of which is the responsibility for drafting a one-year plan of action (Visegrad group webpage, n.d.).

The only organization within the V4 platform is the International Visegrad Fund. The fund was established in 2000 with the aim of supporting the development of cooperation in culture, scientific exchange, research, education, exchange of students and development of cross-border cooperation and promotion of tourism.

Graph 4. V4 Fund organization chart.



Source: Data compiled by author from <https://www.visegradfund.org/about-us/the-fund/>

In most cases, the fund provides financing to activities of non-governmental organizations and individual citizens. The annual contributions to the fund by the governments of the Visegrad Group countries have had an increasing tendency.

The 2004 Kroměříž Summit of Prime Ministers increased the funds to the amount of €3 million per year effective from 2005, €3.2 million as of 2006, €5 million per year effective from 2007, €6 million as of 2009, €7 million as of 2012, and €8 million as of 2014.

Since its establishment in 1991, the V4 has focused on cooperation in various areas, which have evolved over time. The cooperation areas of the Visegrad Four include:

- **Cultural Exchange:** The Visegrad Four places a strong emphasis on cultural exchange and cooperation. They promote cultural events, exchanges, and support for artistic and intellectual activities that highlight the shared cultural heritage of the member countries and foster innovation, research, and technological development as a priority.
- **Security and Defense:** Security and defense cooperation has gained prominence within the V4, particularly considering regional and global security challenges. Member countries collaborate on defense policies, exercises, and information sharing. The V4 have a V4 Battlegroup, which belongs to the European Battlegroup system (EUBG) of the EU.
- **Energy Security:** Ensuring energy security and diversifying energy sources are important priorities for the V4. The member states cooperate on energy projects and policies to reduce their energy dependence on external sources. Besides this, the V4 works on improving infrastructure and transportation links within the region to enhance connectivity and promote economic development. This includes the development of road and rail networks.
- **Cohesion Policy and EU Funding:** The V4 member countries collaborate on policies related to European Union funding, with a focus on ensuring equitable distribution of EU funds within the region.
- **Cross-Border Initiatives:** The V4 encourages cross-border initiatives to strengthen ties between neighbouring regions and enhance cooperation at the local level.

Most of the cooperation within the last years has concentrated on a bilateral domain, as can be seen in Table 4:

Table 4. Bilateral and Multilateral Agreements (excerpts).

Bilateral and Multilateral Agreements	Framework	Areas of cooperation
The Benelux countries	On 8 December 2019, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Benelux and the Visegrad Group resumed their tradition and met at the joint invitation of Luxembourg's Presidency of the Benelux Union and the Czech Republic's Presidency of the Visegrad Group ² .	Migration, EU enlargement, rule of law, energy, climate, mutual understanding and common position.
The Nordic Council of Ministers	Secretary General of the Nordic Council of Ministers, H.E. Halldór Ásgrímsson, met with the representatives of the Czech presidency of the Visegrad Group in Prague on 14 May 2008. H.E. Halldór Ásgrímsson, who is the former prime minister of Iceland and	Climate-change agenda and related research and innovations in the field of safe energy especially regarding the UN conference in Poznan in 2008 and in Copenhagen in 2009. Joint projects in Eastern Europe with the emphasis on Belarus.

²

https://mae.gouvernement.lu/en/actualites.gouvernement2024+en+actualites+toutes_actualites+communiqués+2019+12-decembre+09-joint-statement.html

	served for many years as minister, was accompanied by the delegation of the current Swedish presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers.	
EU's Eastern Partnership	On April 8th, 2020, the Ministers of Czechia, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia decided to issue a Joint statement on the Future of the Eastern Partnership ³ .	Political association and economic integration of the Eastern partners with the EU. To build resilient societies, including democratic, economic and societal aspects, as well as security, environmental and humanitarian dimensions. Building information security and fighting disinformation require independent media, professional journalism and media literacy. Hybrid threats including cyber-attacks need to be addressed in a collaborative way through activities aimed at strengthening resilience. Better civil disaster cooperation and higher healthcare resilience and preparedness.
The Western Balkans	The Prime Ministers of the Visegrad Group countries met with partners from the Western Balkans in Prague on 12	Determination to continue cooperation in border protection.

³ <https://web.archive.org/web/20240527181357/https://www.visegradgroup.eu/documents/official-statements/the-visegrad-group-joint-200409>

	<p>September 2019⁴. In this context, the V4 leaders:</p> <p>Reiterated their unequivocal support for the EU accession of the Western Balkans and their firm belief that reunification of Europe cannot be complete without them joining the European Union.</p> <p>V4 underlined that the EU enlargement policy provides an invaluable tool for achieving security, stability, and prosperity in the Western Balkans; consequently, a credible enlargement policy represents a strategic investment in the security, stability and prosperity of the EU as well.</p> <p>V4 stressed that accession is and will remain a merit-based process fully dependent on the objective progress achieved.</p>	<p>Enhancing the EU's diversification of energy supply through the Southern Gas Corridor</p> <p>To continue supporting extensive regional cooperation, good neighbourly relations, and reconciliation in the Western Balkans also through the International Visegrad Fund's grants (Visegrad+ Grants), scholarship programmes or assistance to the Western Balkans Fund.</p>
NATO	<p>V4 defence cooperation reached a significant milestone in 2014, when V4 Ministers of Defence signed the first V4 defence cooperation strategy entitled Long Term Vision of the Visegrad Countries on Deepening their Defence</p>	<p>Capability development, procurement and defence industry, establishment of multinational units and running cross border activities,</p>

⁴ <https://web.archive.org/web/20240527181654/https://www.visegradgroup.eu/documents/official-statements/v4-statement-on-the-190912>

	Cooperation. In the Long Term Vision, V4 countries committed themselves to strengthening European and transatlantic defence capabilities by deepening their defence cooperation ⁵ .	education, training and exercises.
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Source: Excerpts compiled by author from <https://www.visegradgroup.eu/documents/official-statements>

The bilateral and multilateral agreements reflect the Visegrad Four's commitment to working together on a range of issues that are of regional and international importance. Over the years, the V4 has adapted and expanded its cooperation to address evolving challenges and opportunities in Central Europe and beyond.

V4 challenges between 2019 and 2023

Like many regions globally, the Visegrad countries have been significantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Coordinating responses, managing public health crises, and mitigating economic impacts were shared challenges. The Visegrad Group has faced criticism for perceived challenges to the rule of law and democratic values by certain member countries. Concerns were raised about issues such as judicial independence, media freedom, and the protection of civil liberties.

Another issue has been the V4 differing views on the European Union's approach to migration. Some member states, particularly Hungary and Poland, adopted a more restrictive stance, leading to disagreements with the European Union on migration policy and the distribution of funds, strained relations between the Visegrad Group and EU institutions (Mazur & Banach, 2021).

As for the economic stability, disparities among Visegrad Group members persisted, with varying levels of inflation, Hungary being the country with the highest inflation in the EU in

⁵ <https://www.visegradgroup.eu/home/documents/2013/budapest-joint-statement-140929>

2023. Balancing economic cooperation within the group while addressing these disparities remained an ongoing challenge.

In the context of tensions with Russia, the security environment in Europe, including the conflict in Ukraine and broader geopolitical issues, challenges have been posed to the Visegrad Group. Coordinating responses to security threats, ensuring energy security, and reducing dependence on external suppliers has been a priority for the Visegrad countries.

The following section of the data collection chapter will introduce the PA and V4 responses to the challenges mentioned above. Data will include speeches, statements, official documents, and public declarations made by the leaders and officials of the Pacific Alliance and the Visegrad Group from 2019 to 2023.

4.4 Political Leaders’ Side

Analyzing political leaders’ discourse is instrumental for gaining an integrative understanding of the political landscape, policies, and priorities within the Pacific Alliance and the Visegrad Group. It allows for the identification of potential shifts in policies, signaling changes that may impact various aspects of governance, foreign relations, and regional cooperation. Below, the names of the different leaders of each member of the PA will be presented, along with a series of sources that were used for the discourse analysis:

Pacific Alliance presidents

Year	Chile	Colombia	Mexico	Peru
2019	Sebastián Piñera	Iván Duque	Andrés López	Martín Vizcarra
2020				Martín Vizcarra Manuel Merino Francisco Sagasti
2021				Pedro Castillo
2022				Gabriel Boric
2023				

<p>Pacific Alliance Webpage: https://alianzapacifico.net/en/what-is-the-pacific-alliance/</p> <p>Pacific Alliance Youtube Channel:</p> <p>https://www.youtube.com/@AlianzadelPacificoOficial/featured</p> <p>News Media: Agencia EFE, Imagen Noticias</p>	
2019	<p>News Media: López Obrador will no longer attend the Pacific Alliance Summit in Puerto Vallarta</p> <p>https://youtu.be/rsdL8jUOb_E?si=WovAezlZio1a0-vs</p> <p>News Media: Pacific Alliance Summit: Meeting of Regional Governors.</p> <p>https://youtu.be/zwNZ0QDqoaE?si=wTsVJeM_RzPWqVjC</p> <p>The Pacific Alliance Will Face New Challenges “Without Resting”- EFE</p> <p>https://youtu.be/B-Fjr9L2Iao?si=aGput1_NAOHWVrio</p> <p>News Media: This Was the 4th Pacific Alliance Youth Meeting 2019</p> <p>https://youtu.be/iW_EBHAq-GM?si=fgosstSd1wtdQsJr</p> <p>https://youtu.be/WG6I_KGPTqI?si=UTf0jIolXcq_8WJK</p>
2020	<p>Chile’s president: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bOvlGkv1BHs</p> <p>https://youtu.be/ZQg1LtD0ros?si=resW9ki6VpgOXJPU</p> <p>Mexico’s president: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-y6d9wxABdl</p> <p>Business/ Enterprises Summit:</p> <p>https://youtu.be/GV_Lzr1Z6kQ?si=3YZREevO5lxYx3-P</p>
2021	<p>Media: Ecuador’s president-elect asks Colombia for support to join the Pacific Alliance - AFP</p> <p>https://youtu.be/C0iB2mJ9bIM?si=N-DrHYgh7mReXg8q</p> <p>https://youtu.be/JL6n12Kxhps?si=-M0hCXAJbb6_q_xH</p> <p>2021 Achievements compilation:</p> <p>https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=alianza+del+pacifico+cumbre</p>
2022	<p>Full Presidential Summit: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hSG3-A3ChfM</p> <p>ASEAN - Pacific Alliance (PA) Work Plan (2021-2025)</p>

	<p>XVI Summit of Presidents of the Pacific Alliance, held on January 26th, 2022, in Bahía Málaga-Buenaventura, Colombia, the Ministers of Foreign Trade of Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Peru and the Minister of Foreign Trade of Singapore signed the Free Trade Agreement.</p> <p>Media: Agreement with Singapore: https://youtu.be/cMtiik1oZ4k?si=bTPdzte4zMunh2lA</p> <p>Media: Mexico-Peru political conflict: https://youtu.be/_m8cEYbu-fU?si=kyJdFcKgCesuz_mv</p> <p>Mexico's president: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z0-NPbuJyOI https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GUhsJfNFrz4</p> <p>Media: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jB5qc6Z1d44 https://youtu.be/d9dSs01Y1z0?si=HgWQ86NNb7GNt3cK</p> <p>Media + Chile' president: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RmNNE8nl-3s</p>
2023	<p>Media +Chile' president: https://youtu.be/_m8cEYbu-fU?si=9EUD7gLRPqBHJDwl</p> <p>Media: https://youtu.be/tFpD9v4tFEY?si=vgR2VqE_HhbbV1uA</p>

Statements	
<p>Cooperation council https://alianzapacifico.net/en/cooperation-council-cc/</p>	<p>The Pacific Alliance integration initiative has held three International Cooperation Forums during the Pro Tempore Presidency (PTP) of the following countries:</p> <p>Peru: I Technical Forum on Cooperation between the Pacific Alliance and its Observer States, held in Lima in April 2019</p> <p>Chile: II Pacific Alliance International Cooperation Forum, held virtually on November 10, 12, 17, 19 and 24, 2020</p>

	<p>Colombia: III Pacific Alliance Cooperation Forum on “Sustainable economic reactivation of the region: contributions of international cooperation,” held virtually on November 29, 2021</p>
<p>Presidential declarations https://alianzapacifico.net/instrumentos-declaraciones-presidenciales/?cp=2</p>	<p>Declaración de Bahía Málaga-Buenaventura Anexos 1 y 2-2022</p> <p>Declaración Presidencial de la Alianza del Pacífico para el fortalecimiento de la economía creativa 2021</p> <p>Hoja de Ruta para el Mercado Digital Regional de la Alianza del Pacífico 2021</p> <p>Hoja de Ruta hacia una Gestión Sostenible de Plásticos 11 de diciembre de 2020</p> <p>Hoja de Ruta para la autonomía y el empoderamiento económico de las mujeres en la Alianza del Pacífico 11 de diciembre de 2020</p> <p>Declaración sobre el desarrollo del mercado digital regional y el impulso hacia la transformación digital 11 de diciembre de 2020</p> <p>Declaración sobre igualdad de género 11 de diciembre de 2020</p> <p>Declaración de Santiago -anexos 1y 2-11 de diciembre de 2020</p> <p>Declaración Presidencial de la Alianza del Pacífico sobre el Sistema Multilateral de Comercio. Julio 6 de 2019</p>

	<p>Declaración Presidencial de la Alianza del Pacífico sobre la Gestión Sostenible de los Plásticos. Julio 6 de 2019</p> <p>Declaración de Lima. Julio 6 de 2019</p>
<p>Joint declarations</p> <p>https://alianzapacifico.net/instrumentos-declaraciones-conjuntas/</p>	<p>Joint declaration between the Pacific Alliance and Singapore, 2022.</p> <p>Joint Declaration on a partnership between the States Parties to the Framework Agreement of the Pacific Alliance and the European Union. 2019.</p> <p>Declaración Conjunta Alianza del Pacífico - Japón. 2019.</p> <p>Joint Declaration between States Parties to the Framework Agreement of the Pacific Alliance and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). 2019</p> <p>Declaración sobre la Asociación entre la Comisión Económica Euroasiática y los Estados parte del Acuerdo Marco de la Alianza del Pacífico. Suscrita el 5 de julio de 2019.</p> <p>Consejo CEAP:</p> <p>https://alianzapacifico.net/instrumentos-declaraciones-ceap/</p> <p>Declaración CEAP Ciudad de México, noviembre de 2022</p> <p>Declaración del Consejo Empresarial de la Alianza del Pacífico - Sesión XVIII 2022</p> <p>Declaración del Consejo Empresarial de la Alianza del Pacífico, diciembre 11 de 2020</p>

	<p>Comision interparlamentaria: https://alianzapacifico.net/instrumentos-comision-interparlamentaria-de-la-alianza-del-pacifico/</p> <p>Declaración de la XII Sesión de la CISAP 2020</p> <p>Memorandos de entendimiento: https://alianzapacifico.net/instrumentos-memorando-de-entendimiento/</p> <p>Memorando de Entendimiento de Cooperación en el Campo de los Medio de Comunicación de la Alianza del Pacífico-2019</p> <p>Memorando de Entendimiento relativo al reconocimiento de buenas prácticas gubernamentales y al desarrollo de mecanismos de cooperación para la prevención y lucha contra la corrupción en los sistemas de contratación pública en la Alianza del Pacífico 2019</p>
<p>Interinstitutional agreements and research https://alianzapacifico.net/instrumentos-acuerdos-interinstitucionales/ https://alianzapacifico.net/documentos-estudios/</p>	<p>2020 Guía de buenas prácticas para Autoridades Nacionales de Notificación del Acuerdo sobre Aplicación de Medidas Sanitarias y Fitosanitarias (MSF) de la Organización Mundial de Comercio (OMC). 2020</p> <p>Estudio de Limitaciones Regulatorias para emprendimientos de alto impacto en los países de la Alianza del Pacífico 2019</p>

	Estudio Potenciales Encadenamientos Productivos entre los Países de la AP y Mercados de China, Japón, Corea y Tailandia (2019)
Reports and publications https://alianzapacifico.net/documentos-informes/ https://alianzapacifico.net/documentos-publicaciones/	Informe gestión 2013-2020 de la plataforma de movilidad estudiantil y académica Informe gestión 2013-2020 de la plataforma de movilidad estudiantil y académica Lineamientos comunes para el diseño de una política de gestión de factores de riesgo psicosociales laborales y promoción de la salud mental en los lugares de trabajo de los países de la AP. 2023 Pacific Alliance Business and Investment Guide 2018/2019

Below, the names of the different leaders of each member of the V4 will be presented, along with a series of sources that were used for the discourse analysis:

Visegrad group prime ministers

Year	Czechia	Hungary	Slovakia	Poland
2019	Andrej Babiš	Viktor Orbán	Peter Pellegrini	Mateusz Morawiecki
2020			Igor Matovič	
2021	Petr Fiala		Eduard Heger	
2022				
2023			Ludovít Ódor Robert Fico	

Webpage: <https://www.visegradgroup.eu/>

Youtube Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/@VisegradfundOrgV4>

2019

2018/2019 Slovak Presidency report.

Joint Statement of the Ministers of Benelux and V4 ; Brussels, December 8, 2019

V4 Statement on the Western Balkans; Prague, September 12, 2019

Joint Declaration of the V4 Ministers of Interior; Bratislava, June 21, 2019

Communiqué from the 29th Meeting of the Ministers Responsible for Culture of the Visegrad Group Countries; Víglaš, June 11, 2019

Statute of the „International Visegrad Prize “; Víglaš, June 11, 2019

Joint Communiqué of the V4 Defence Ministers ; Piešťany, June 10, 2019

Protocol on co-operation in the field of judicial training activities between judicial academies; Pezinok, May 29, 2019

V4 Foreign Ministers’ Joint Statement on the Western Balkans; Bratislava, May 28, 2019

Joint Declaration of the Ministers of the Czech Republic, Hungary, the Republic of Poland and the Slovak Republic Responsible for Transport, Development and Eu Funds Concerning the Project of High-Speed Railway Network in Central Europe and its Financing; Bratislava, May 21, 2019

Common Declaration of the Ministers of Agriculture and Ministers of Research of the Visegrad Group, Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania and Slovenia on the future role of the BIOEAST Initiative in the context of Horizon Europe ; Stará Lesná, May 9, 2019

The Visegrad Group Joint Statement on 10th Anniversary of the Eastern Partnership; Bratislava, May 6, 2019

Ministerial Declaration of the on the Mutual eGovernment Cooperation; Brussels, April 9, 2019

Protocol on co-operation in the field of tourism ; High Tatras, March 13, 2019

	<p>Joint Statement of the V4 Ministers Responsible for Smart Cities Development on the Occasion of the Conference V4 Slovakia Towards Smart Cities; Bratislava, March 5, 2019</p> <p>Memorandum of Cooperation between Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic and InnoEnergy Central Europe; Bratislava, March 5, 2019</p> <p>Conclusions of the Meeting of the Foreign Affairs Committees of the Parliaments of the Visegrad Group countries; Bratislava, February 25-26, 2019</p> <p>Declaration of the Visegrad Group and the Federal Republic of Germany on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of historic changes in Central Europe; Bratislava, February 7, 2019</p>
2020	<p>2019/2020 Czech Presidency report.</p> <p>Joint Paper by Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Romania and Slovakia regarding the technical and administrative assistance for Cohesion Member States under Connecting Europe Facility Transport for the period 2021-2027; Dec. 9, 2020</p> <p>Joint Paper by Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia regarding the Multiannual Work Program for Connecting Europe Facility Transport for the period 2021-2023; Dec. 9, 2020</p> <p>Joint Statement of the V4 Transport Ministers on the Single European Sky adopted during an informal videoconference of Transport Ministers in the framework of the policy debate on the Commission proposals concerning the Single European Sky; Dec. 8, 2020</p> <p>Joint V4 Statement on the Upcoming TEN-T Network Revision; Dec. 3, 2020</p> <p>New Pact on Migration and Asylum (Joint Position of Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Estonia and Slovenia)/non-paper</p> <p>V4 Contribution to the Pharmaceutical Strategy for the EU; Sept. 29, 2020</p>

	<p>Joint Declaration of the Ministers of Agriculture of the Visegrad Group and Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania and Slovenia on the important elements of the Common Agricultural Policy reform in relation to the agreement on the 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework; Poznań, Sept. 27-29, 2020</p> <p>Joint Communiqué of the Ministers of Economic Affairs of the Visegrad Group; Sept. 23, 2020</p> <p>Joint Statement of V4 Prime Ministers on Alexey Navalny</p> <p>Joint Declaration of V4 Finance Ministers on the Cooperation in the Financial Area; Warsaw, Sept. 4, 2020</p> <p>The Long Term Vision of the Visegrad Group Countries on Their Defence Cooperation; Prague, June 24, 2020</p> <p>Joint Communiqué of the Visegrad Group Ministers of Defence; Prague, June 24, 2020</p> <p>Communiqué from the 30th Meeting of the Ministers responsible for Culture of the Visegrad Group Countries; Prague, June 24, 2020</p> <p>Declaration of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, Hungary, the Republic of Poland and the Slovak Republic on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Visegrad Fund; Prague, June 9, 2020</p> <p>Joint Press Release of V4 and NB8 Presiding Countries; Prague, June 3, 2020</p> <p>The Visegrad Group Joint Statement on the Future of the Eastern Partnership; Prague, April 8, 2020</p> <p>Joint Statement of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Visegrad Group and Germany; Prague, March 13, 2020</p> <p>Joint Statement of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the V4 countries on the Western Balkans; Prague, February 12, 2020</p>
2021	2020/2021 Polish Presidency report.

	<p>Statement of the Presidency of the Visegrad Group (following a summit of V4 Prime Ministers with the President of the French Republic); Budapest, Dec. 13, 2021</p> <p>Joint Statement of the Committees on Economics of the V4 Parliamentary Chambers; Budapest, Dec. 10, 2021</p> <p>Joint Statement of the V4 Parliamentary Committees on Agriculture; Dec. 8, 2021</p> <p>Joint Statement of V4 Presidents Regarding the Situation on the Borders of Poland, Lithuania and Latvia; Nov. 30, 2021</p> <p>Joint Appeal of the Presidents of the Visegrad Group Countries Regarding the COVID-19 Situation; Nov. 30, 2021</p> <p>Joint Statement of the Chairmen of the Parliamentary Committees on Foreign Affairs of the Visegrad Group on the Situation at the External Borders of the EU with Belarus [DOCX]; Budapest, Nov. 22, 2021</p> <p>Joint Statement of V4 Ministers Responsible for Energy on Path towards Climate Neutrality; Paks, Nov. 18, 2021</p> <p>V4 Declaration on Automatic Mutual Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education; Győr, Oct. 22, 2021</p> <p>Joint Declaration of V4 Ministers of Labour ; Budapest, Oct. 18, 2021</p> <p>Joint Statement of Ministers of the Interior of the Visegrad Group/, Austria, and Slovenia; Budapest, Oct. 5, 2021</p> <p>Joint Declaration of V4 Finance Ministers; Budapest, Sep. 30, 2021</p> <p>Statement on the European Integration of South-East Europe (by Parliamentary Delegations from South-East Europe and the Visegrad Group) [DOCX]; Budapest, Sep. 24, 2021</p> <p>Joint V4 Statement on the Scenarios o Trans-European Transport Network Development; Brdo, SI; Sep. 23, 2021</p> <p>Joint Statement of the V4 Prime Ministers/; Ljubljana, SI; July 9, 2021</p> <p>Joint Statement of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Visegrad Group Countries on the Western Balkans; Poznań/Rogalin, June 28, 2021</p>
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	<p>Joint declaration of the Visegrad Group and France on mutual cooperation in the field of pharmaceutical industry development ; Cracow, June 21, 2021</p> <p>Communiqué of the Visegrad Group Chiefs of Defense Meeting in Cracow ; June 23-24, 2021</p> <p>Joint declaration of V4 Ministers responsible for Transport on cooperation in development of railway transport; Cracow, June 18, 2021</p> <p>Joint Statement on the Meeting of the Speakers of Parliaments of the Visegrad Group States/; June 11, 2021</p> <p>Conclusions of the videoconference of the foreign affairs committees of V4 parliaments; June 8, 2021</p> <p>Outcome document of the Agenda 2030 V4+ Forum/; June 2, 2021</p> <p>Conclusions from the meeting of the Committee on Agriculture delegations of the Visegrad Group countries' parliaments; Warsaw, May 14, 2021</p> <p>Joint Declaration of V4 Ministers Responsible for Family Issues; Warsaw, May 13, 2021</p> <p>Joint Statement of the Foreign Ministers of the Visegrad Group countries on the Eastern Partnership countries; April 29, 2021</p> <p>Declaration of the Prime Ministers of the Visegrad Group on the solidarity with the Czech Republic regarding recent actions by the Russian Federation; April 26, 2021</p> <p>Statement of the Presidency on behalf of the Presidents of Parliaments of V4 countries; April 21, 2021</p> <p>Joint Declaration of the Ministers of Agriculture of the Visegrad Group and Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania on the Opportunities and Challenges of Agricultural Holdings in Light of the Farm-to-Fork Strategy; April 21, 2021</p> <p>Joint Letter by Seven State Leaders to EU Commission on the Role of Nuclear Power in the EU Climate and Energy Policy; March 19, 2021</p> <p>Statement of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the V4 countries</p>
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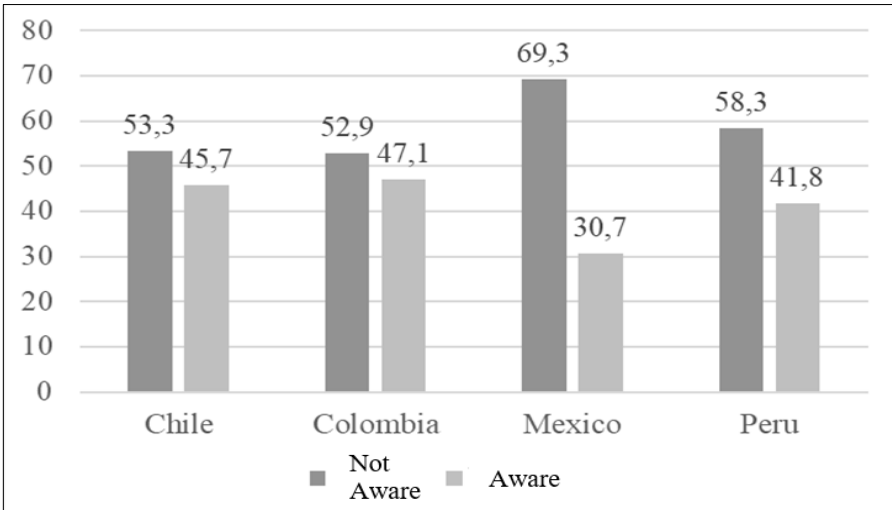
	<p>Declaration of the Prime Ministers of the Czech Republic, Hungary, the Republic of Poland and the Slovak Republic on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the Visegrad Group; Visegrad Group Joint Declaration on Mutual Cooperation in Digital Projects; Cracow, February 17, 2021</p> <p>President Duda's address at the plenary session of the Meeting of Presidents of the Visegrad Group states; Jurata, PL</p>
2022	<p>2021/2022 Hungarian Presidency report Mid-term bulletin July-December / January-June</p> <p>Summary of main activities and achievements</p> <p>Declaration of the Defence and Security Committees of Parliaments of the Visegrad Group; December 4-5, 2022</p> <p>Framework for an Enhanced Visegrad Group Defence Planning Cooperation ; November 9, 2022</p> <p>Conclusions of the Heads of Delegations of the V4 Parliamentary Economic Affairs Committees ; October 23-24, 2022</p> <p>Conclusions of the Heads of Delegations of the V4 Parliamentary Agricultural Committees; October 14, 2022</p> <p>Joint Declaration of V4 Agriculture Ministers and their Counterparts from Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania and Slovenia the Challenges and Opportunities of Member States in Relation to EU Carbon Farming Initiatives ; Pezinok, October 7, 2022</p> <p>Joint Declaration of V4 Interior Ministers ; Budapest, June 30, 2022</p> <p>Memorandum of Understanding between ministries responsible for infrastructure and transportation of the Visegrad Group countries ; Budapest, June 24, 2022</p> <p>Conclusions of the Meeting of European Affairs Committees of V4 Parliaments ; Košice, April 24, 2022</p>

	<p>V4 + United Kingdom Joint Statement of Prime Ministers; London, March 8, 2022</p> <p>Joint Communiqué on Providing Joint V4 Assistance to Refugees from Ukraine; London, March 8, 2022</p> <p>Joint Declaration of Ministers of Agriculture of the Visegrad Group countries and Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania, and Slovenia; Visegrad, Mar. 3, 2022</p> <p>Joint Statement of Ministers of the Interior of the Visegrad Group countries and France; Budapest, Feb. 24, 2022</p> <p>Joint Statement of the Visegrad Group States on the Proposal on Revision of the TEN-T Network Development [DOCX]; Le Bourget, Feb. 22, 2022</p> <p>Joint Statement of the Energy Ministers of the Visegrad Group Countries ; Budapest, Feb. 8, 2022</p> <p>Joint Statement of Defence and Law Enforcement Committees of V4 Parliamentary Chambers; Debrecen, Jan. 28, 2022</p> <p>V4 Statement to strengthen community-based services for people with disabilities [DOCX]; Budapest, Jan. 27, 2022</p>
2023	<p>Not available. Political leaders of the Visegrad Group remained highly active in public communication, but explicitly V4-framed discourse declined sharply. Most speeches, declarations, and social media posts were articulated at the national level, reflecting deep political divergences that constrained collective leadership messaging. As a result, the V4 increasingly operated less as a platform for regional integration and more as a symbolic reference point invoked selectively or defensively by individual leaders.</p>

4.5 Population Side

Morales, Maldonado, and Schiavon (2016) indicate that to assess citizens' perceptions of the Pacific Alliance, the Americas and the World project conducted a survey in 2014. The study aimed to answer three key questions: What do citizens know about the Pacific Alliance? How do they evaluate this regional cooperation? What is the perceived social value of this integration? Notably, the findings revealed that over half of the population in the four-member countries either lacked knowledge of the Alliance or held no opinion on it, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Level of awareness regarding Pacific Alliance (2014-2015)



Source: Data in this figure are adapted from Morales, Maldonado & Schiavon, (2016).

Data suggests that there are variations in the level of awareness between countries. While in Colombia 47% of the population know and express an opinion about the PA (similar to the almost 46% of Chile), in Mexico only 30% of the population know and are able to assess it.

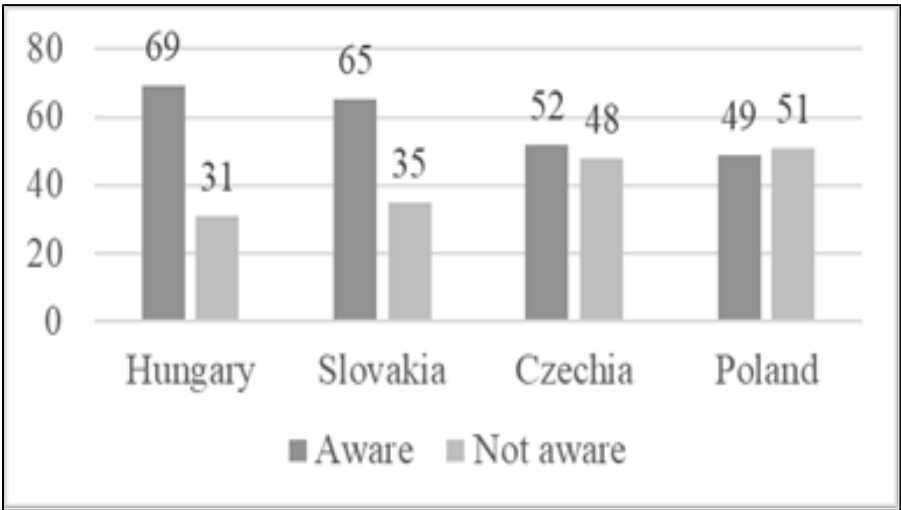
Peru shows a more favourable level of awareness among its population, with 40% (The Americas and the world, 2022). In principle, this implies an important challenge for the Alliance and its Member Countries, since there are relevant proportions of its societies for whom this mechanism is not yet part of their knowledge, within national and international contexts.

Analyzing the previous data will allow the researcher to build an informed answer to the question about the role of citizens' discourse within regional integration initiatives. Additionally, gathering data regarding media coverage, news articles, and editorials from reputable sources that discuss the political discourse and regional integration efforts in the Pacific Alliance and Visegrad Group, provides insights into public perception and the impact of political discourse on public opinion.

Year	News
2023	<p>Interface meeting of The Committee of Permanent Representatives to ASEAN with National Coordinators of the Pacific Alliance October 31, 2023 https://asean.org/interface-meeting-of-the-committee-of-permanent-representatives-to-asean-with-national-coordinators-of-the-pacific-alliance/</p> <p>Tras Singapur, dos nuevos países buscan unirse a la Alianza del Pacífico: así avanzan domingo, 22 de octubre de 2023 https://www.larepublica.co/globoeconomia/nuevos-postulantes-para-unirse-a-la-alianza-del-pacifico-3733888</p> <p>Alianza del Pacífico: la diplomacia al estilo Boric Emilia Rojas Sasse 30/06/202330 de junio de 2023 https://www.dw.com/es/alianza-del-pac%C3%ADfico-la-diplomacia-al-estilo-boric/a-66083720</p> <p>Dina Boluarte se estrena al frente de la Alianza del Pacífico: “Hemos logrado superar situaciones políticas” https://elpais.com/internacional/2023-08-12/dina-boluarte-se-estrena-al-frente-de-la-alianza-del-pacifico-hemos-logrado-superar-situaciones-politicas.html</p> <p>Sexta reunión del Subgrupo Técnico MRV de la Alianza del Pacífico. Avances en la política climática y su implementación a través de sistemas de MRV operativos y sostenibles. https://www.cepal.org/es/eventos/sexta-reunion-subgrupo-tecnico-mrv-la-alianza-pacifico-avances-la-politica-climatica-su</p>

As for the Visegrad Four countries, the most recent report on public opinion was in 2021 (The Visegrad group, 2021). The survey highlighted the highest level of awareness about the Visegrad integration in Hungary (69%), followed by Slovakia (65%), the Czech Republic (52%) and Poland (49%), as figure 3 shows:

Figure 3. Level of awareness regarding the Visegrad Group (2021)



Source: Compiled by the author based on International Visegrad Fund (IVF) 2021 data.

Data showed that in all four countries, people’s awareness of the V4 increased considerably, in comparison to data from 2001. Hungary had the most significant increase among the member states. According to V4 citizens, the most important area of cooperation is economy and trade, evidencing their focus on socio-economic issues.

However, priorities tend to differ slightly in the case of Slovak and Polish respondents who prefer the development of tourism, while the Czechs included security and defense within the alliance priorities. Overall, the report indicated that although there are different important areas of cooperation, society’s views on priorities do not differ dramatically from one country to another.

Regarding media coverage the following sources have been explored:

Year	News
2019	<p>Visegrad Group boycotts EU summit on migration</p> <p>https://youtu.be/FvyVqUfUx5o?si=xfMzdjbyY9HFCCw5</p> <p>https://youtu.be/HFFIk0dLChI?si=xroocuy-B3aCnLMg</p> <p>Poland Daily News - The Visegrad Group stops Timmermans from EC Presidency</p> <p>https://youtu.be/RW0_I4sc1IU?si=4uRX9raJaa0wYGZs</p> <p>Merkel, V4 leaders, join forces on migrant project</p> <p>https://youtu.be/k_6qbmO2e54?si=CE_4m6ySdgMP1TI3</p>
2020	No available
2021	<p>President Moon discusses cooperation with Visegrad group</p> <p>https://youtu.be/pWm8l3RPMPA?si=PMeYl9RXz61IVdXJ</p> <p>Divergence of interests splits the Visegrad 4</p> <p>https://youtu.be/9sIwa2_A0_k?si=4DSA8suj7b1nB9Qd</p> <p>Summary of 30 years of V4 cooperation. Visegrad cooperation EU debates for the future</p> <p>https://youtu.be/v1d2scBuxfA?si=Pl1EYvEaCvoYBxfV</p>
2022	<p>Japan keen to strengthen ties with Visegrad Group</p> <p>https://youtu.be/CVnOzcX57MM?si=UJ47f791vNrkd1Cl</p> <p>Macron's Visegrad Agenda: A Tougher Stance on Immigration?</p> <p>https://youtu.be/6BXr-G137LA?si=xNfHDLbyHtSQNuGC</p>
2023	<p>Key Highlights from the Visegrad Group Prime Ministers' Meeting 2023 in Bratislava</p> <p>https://youtu.be/_EJ96Xr2Qr8?si=S7VFoc2zf2UbwLN5</p> <p>Articles: https://balkaninsight.com/2023/03/01/visegrad-group-no-rekindling-the-romance/</p>

Considering the PA and V4 data on public opinion, it can be noted that, in the first case, discourses of integration have not been as effective as in the European case, where there seems to be a wide awareness of the cooperation and its advantages. This comparison highlights the importance of adopting an emphasis on political efforts to construct collective identities under discourses of belonging, leading to the consolidation and production of a new common sense that might be favourable to regional integration.

4.6 External Influence

External discourses can significantly impact the Pacific Alliance and the Visegrad Group in terms of shaping perceptions, policies, and international relations. Here's an overview of sources selected to explore how external discourses may influence these regional groups:

Pacific Alliance relations (Preliminary data)

Year	USA/EU
2019	<p>Pacific Alliance promotes internationalization of innovation in the United States https://andina.pe/agencia/noticia-alianza-del-pacifico-promueve-internacionalizacion-de-innovacion-estados-unidos-778188.aspx</p> <p>The European Union and Pacific Alliance commit to deepening their partnership https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/european-union-and-pacific-alliance-commit-deepening-their-partnership_en</p>
2020	<p>The United States is the main trading partner for the Pacific Alliance countries https://www.larepublica.co/globoeconomia/estados-unidos-es-el-gran-socio-comercial-de-los-paises-de-la-alianza-del-pacifico-3072287</p> <p>Eight Stock Market Indices: United States, Spain, Pacific Alliance and Mercosur. 2007- November 30, 2020. https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3744135</p> <p>Pacific Alliance, MERCOSUR and the European Union: An analysis through market. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A4tf67yRPoY</p>

2021	<p>La Alianza del Pacífico en tiempos convulsos</p> <p>https://www.kas.de/documents/266027/13545430/PB2+-+AP.pdf/0ac8208d-ad4c-ba3a-64f4-eb8691df61e2?version=1.0&t=1626188891026</p> <p>The Pacific Alliance makes progress towards labour mobility between Mexico, Colombia, Peru and Chile</p> <p>https://eurosocial.eu/en/actualidad/la-alianza-del-pacifico-avanza-hacia-la-movilidad-laboral-entre-mexico-colombia-peru-y-chile/</p>
2022	<p>What's happening with the Pacific Alliance?</p> <p>https://mascolombia.com/que-esta-pasando-con-la-alianza-del-pacifico/</p> <p>The EU and the Pacific Alliance: a partnership worth advancing</p> <p>https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/eu-and-pacific-alliance-partnership-worth-advancing_en?s=160</p> <p>Values in European Union-Latin America and Mercosur-Pacific Alliance convergence. Do European shared values promote convergence?</p> <p>https://ojs.unito.it/index.php/deeuropa/article/download/6318/5899/</p>
2023	<p>Can NATO expand into the Pacific?</p> <p>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CKL8GIDFAd8</p>

Discourses from external sources regarding international trade, economic policies, and globalization have the potential to impact the economic strategies pursued by the Pacific Alliance countries. The ongoing dialogues on free trade, protectionism, and global economic development can shape the alliance's stance on economic integration.

Additionally, global conversations surrounding climate change and sustainability may play a role in shaping the Pacific Alliance's policies related to environmental conservation and sustainable development. External pressures or endorsements to adopt eco-friendly practices could also influence the internal discussions within member countries.

Furthermore, external discourses addressing human rights, social justice, and equality have the capacity to shape the domestic policies of Pacific Alliance nations. The Alliance's approach to these issues may be influenced by international scrutiny or support directed towards specific social concerns.

Visegrad group relations (Preliminary data)

Year	USA/EU
2019	<p>European cohesion and the Visegrad group: The importance of hearts and minds https://ecfr.eu/article/commentary_european_cohesion_visegrad_group_importance_of_hearts_minds/</p>
2020	<p>Influence of Accession of the Visegrad Group Countries to the EU on the Situation in Their Labour Markets https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/12/16/6694</p> <p>Central Europe, a brief analysis of the Visegrad Group’s function within the EU political framework https://fpc.org.uk/central-europe-a-brief-analysis-of-the-visegrad-groups-function-within-the-eu-political-framework/</p> <p>Realization of the EU's Cohesion Policy in Health Care in the Visegrad Group Countries in the Perspective 2014-2020 https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32391306/</p>
2021	<p>The Future of Europe: What Role for Visegrad Cooperation? https://visegradinsight.eu/app/uploads/2021/05/AMO_The_Future_of_Europe_What_role_for_the_V4.pdf</p> <p>Trends of Visegrad European Policy 2021 https://www.amo.cz/en/trends-of-visegrad-european-policy/trends-of-visegrad-european-policy-966/</p> <p>What is left of the “Visegrad group” https://institutdelors.eu/content/uploads/2025/04/PB_210311_What-is-left-of-the-Visegrad-Group_Macek_EN.pdf</p> <p>The Visegrad Countries in the Global Order https://www.lse.ac.uk/ideas/podcasts/visegrad-countries-global-order</p>
2022	<p>Rethinking the Role of Visegrad Group in the EU Enlargement Process https://intermestic.unpad.ac.id/index.php/intermestic/article/view/461</p> <p>The EU and the great powers: a stakeholder view from Visegrad</p>

	https://neweasterneurope.eu/2022/01/04/the-eu-and-the-great-powers-a-stakeholder-view-from-visegrad/
2023	<p>A Divided “Visegrad Four” Navigates Relations with the European Union https://www.orfonline.org/research/a-divided-visegrad-four-navigates-relations-with-the-european-union</p> <p>Visegrad Group: No Rekindling the Romance https://balkaninsight.com/2023/03/01/visegrad-group-no-rekindling-the-romance/</p> <p>Congratulatory Message on the 30th Anniversary of the Visegrad Group (V4) https://2021-2025.state.gov/congratulatory-message-on-the-30th-anniversary-of-the-visegrad-group-v4/</p>

The Visegrad Group, being part of the EU, is affected by EU discussions concerning matters like migration, economic policies, and political values. Discussions within the EU, particularly those centered on the rule of law, have the potential to influence the conversations within the member states.

In terms of NATO and security, conversations taking place outside NATO and global dialogues on security can have implications for the defense and security policies of the V4 countries. Shared narratives addressing common security threats might impact their joint strategies. External discussions related to democracy, the rule of law, and governance can mold the political conversations within the Visegrad Group. Criticisms or endorsements from international entities can have an impact on domestic political narratives within the group.

Pacific Alliance and Visegrad Group ties

Discussions from external sources concerning global geopolitical tensions and conflicts can have an impact on the foreign policies of both regional groups. Changes in international relations may lead to adjustments in the discourse within both the Pacific Alliance and the Visegrad Group. Dialogues within multilateral organizations, such as the United Nations, have the potential to shape the positions and policies of both regional groups. The alignment

or divergence of viewpoints within these organizations can contribute to the external discourse.

Year	PA/V4
<p>2019- 2023</p>	<p>https://kki.hu/en/synergies-between-the-pacific-alliance-and-the-visegrad-group-a-high-level-working-group-meeting-in-budapest/</p> <p>https://2015-2019.kormany.hu/en/ministry-of-foreign-affairs-and-trade/news/visegrad-group-expands-relations-with-new-partner-cooperation-begins-between-v4-and-pacific-alliance</p> <p>https://www.visegradgroup.eu/visegrad-bulletin-8-1</p> <p>https://cdn.www.gob.pe/uploads/document/file/205439/EY-library-pacific-alliance-business-and-investment-guide-2018-2019.pdf</p> <p>https://alianzapacifico.net/proyectos-de-cooperacion-observadores-hungria/</p>

External discussions conveyed through international media and public opinion can shape how policies and actions undertaken by the Pacific Alliance and the Visegrad Group are perceived. It's crucial to acknowledge that the influence of external discourses is dynamic and subject to fluctuations based on global developments, political shifts, and evolving international relations. Regularly monitoring contemporary sources and ongoing discussions is imperative for gaining insight into the current impact of external discourses on these regional groups.

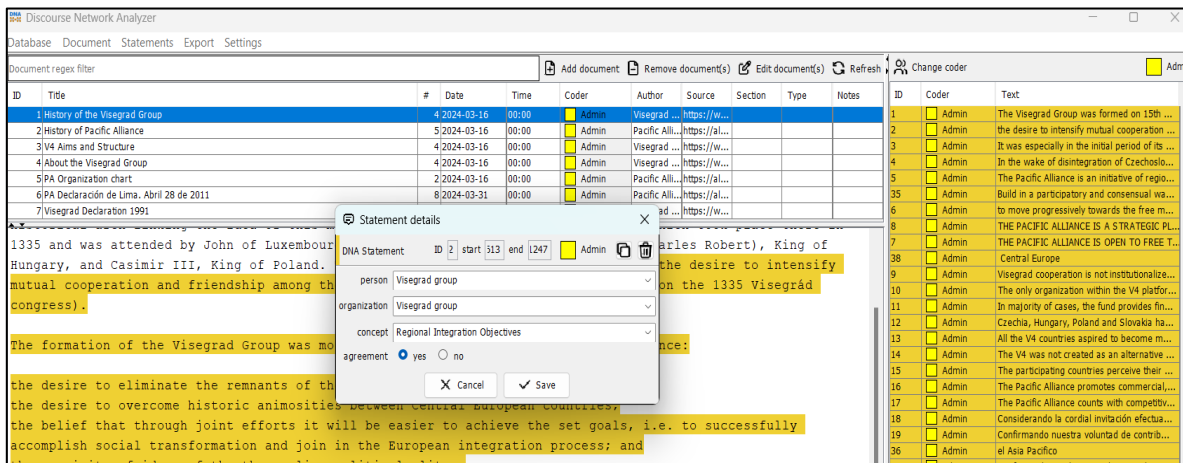
5. CHAPTER V: DATA ANALYSIS

This chapter aims to examine the role of political discourse in shaping regional integration initiatives within the Pacific Alliance and the Visegrad Group contexts from 2019 to 2023. By employing a Discourse Network Analyzer (DNA) approach, this section seeks to address the discursive interactions among key actors, ideologies, and policy priorities, understanding the underlying dynamics driving regional integration agendas.

Discourse Network Analyzer (DNA) offers a systematic framework for understanding how ideas, discourses, and actors interact and shape each other within these networks. Developed in the 2000s primarily by Volker Schneider, Frank Janning, Philip Leifeld and Thomas Malang, DNA provides insights into the structure, dynamics, and power relations embedded in discursive formations (Franz, 2023).

In this chapter, text data from various sources such as official statements, speeches, and media coverage related to regional integration efforts within the PA and V4 countries underwent annotation using a coding scheme suitable for network analysis. The coding scheme included variables like actor, concept, agreement relation, and timestamp as figure 4 shows:

Figure 4. Discourse Network Analyzer (DNA) sample.



Source: Software <https://github.com/leifeld/dna?tab=readme-ov-file>

Within each document, statements made by actors within the PA and V4 were analyzed. Actors represented political leaders, government officials, policymakers, and other influential stakeholders involved in regional integration discussions. Concepts represented the topics or themes discussed, such as economic cooperation, security, cultural identity, and sovereignty. The agreement relation variable indicated the sentiment of each statement, distinguishing between positive and negative viewpoints on integration efforts.

Timestamps allowed for the temporal analysis of political discourse and regional integration efforts within the PA and V4 contexts over time. By examining how statements and sentiments evolved over months or years, the researcher can identify trends, shifts, and turning points in the discourse landscape.

5.1 Research Data Analysis Goals

The coding scheme used in this research was adaptable to suit the specific research objectives and theoretical framework guiding the analysis (see table 5). Additional variables, such as location, or specific policy priorities, could be incorporated as needed to provide an understanding of the dynamics shaping regional integration initiatives within the PA and V4.

Table 5. Research questions and Data Analysis goals.

Research questions	Data Analysis goals	Data
1. How has political discourse in PA and V4 shaped regional integration efforts over the last 5 years?	To uncover the rhetorical strategies employed by political leaders to advance or hinder integration initiatives.	Key speeches, policy documents, and official statements.
2. What are the patterns, similarities and differences of communication and discursive dynamics among PA and V4 member states, and what factors contribute to these variations?	To uncover underlying factors contributing to variations in discourse across different contexts.	Themes, rhetorical frames, and linguistic markers.

3. How do political actors use discourse to influence decision-making processes and policy formulation?	To elucidate the mechanisms through which discourse shapes the course of integration efforts.	Strategies employed by political leaders, interest groups, and other stakeholders.
4. What are the dominant narratives and discourses surrounding regional integration alliances in citizens' opinions, and how do they impact public support or opposition?	To discern prevailing attitudes towards integration initiatives and their implications for public opinion dynamics.	Public discourse, media coverage, and opinion polls.
5. How have the world powers' discourses on recent global crises impacted PA and V4 integrations?	To uncover the influence of external factors on regional dynamics.	Contextualization of regional integration efforts within the broader geopolitical landscape.

Note. Author's own elaboration.

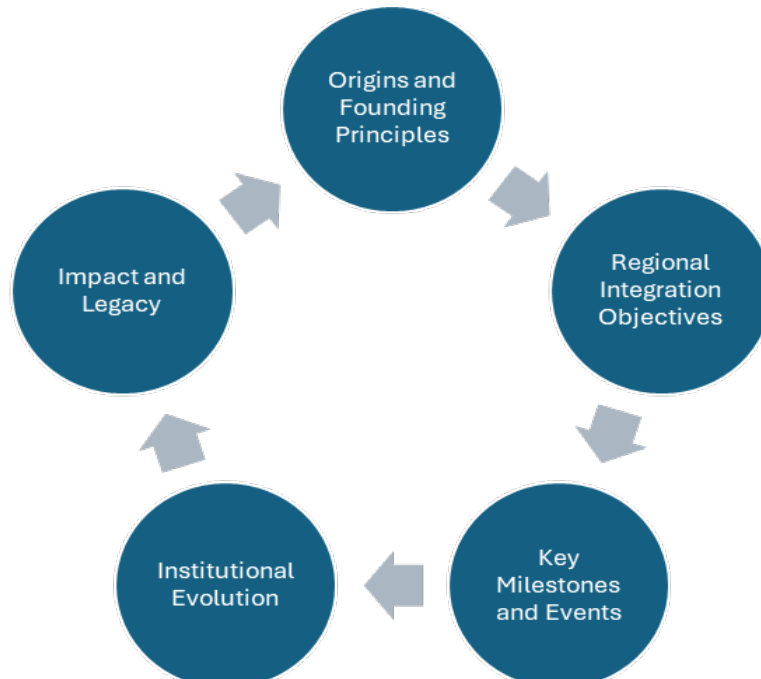
Through an examination of the above research questions, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the dynamics driving regional cooperation in an increasingly interconnected world.

5.2 Historical Dimension

Research question 1: How has political discourse in PA and V4 shaped regional integration efforts between 2019 and 2023?

To historically analyze the discourse of the Visegrad Group (V4) and the Pacific Alliance (PA) in the context of regional integration efforts over 5 years, several categories and topics have been examined. These categories shed light on the evolution, trends, and key themes in the discourse of these regional blocs over time. Here are the categories selected for the historical analysis:

Figure 5. Discourse analysis: Historical categories.



Source: Compiled by the author.

Investigating the discourse surrounding the History of the V4 and PA involved analyzing official statements, declarations, and speeches by founding members regarding the establishment of these regional organizations, their objectives, and the rationale behind their formation. Addressing the first research question entails examining the discourse on regional integration objectives articulated by the V4 and PA over time. This involves analyzing how the goals and priorities of this research cases have evolved since their foundation, including discussions on economic integration, political cooperation, and social and cultural ties.

Furthermore, it is fundamental to explore the discourse surrounding key milestones and events related to significant summits, agreements, treaties, and institutional developments and the establishment of new institutions, changes in organizational structure, decision-making processes, and the role of leadership.

Interpreting the use of the most common words in the PA declaration provide insight into the key themes and priorities emphasized within the text (see table 6), including regional integration, cooperation among countries, economic progress, and the strategic importance of the Pacific region.

Table 6. PA key themes and priorities

Word	Observation
Countries	Collaborative nature of the Pacific Alliance, highlighting the participation and commitment of multiple nations towards common goals of integration and cooperation.
Integration	Main objective of the Pacific Alliance is to deepen economic, political, and social ties among member countries, fostering a cohesive regional alliance.
Pacific	The recurring mention of the term refers to the strategic focus of the alliance on the Pacific region, focusing on its geographical scope.
Cooperation	The importance of mutual support and coordination in achieving shared objectives.
Progress	The term suggests a forward-looking approach within the alliance, indicating a commitment to advancing towards common goals of economic development, social inclusion, and regional stability.
Economic	Efforts to promote trade liberalization, investment attraction, and economic growth among member countries.
Agreements	Signaling the commitment of member countries to establish clear frameworks for cooperation and integration.
Region	Highlighting the interconnectedness of member countries and their shared interests in promoting regional stability and prosperity.
Framework	The term suggests the establishment of structured mechanisms and guidelines within the alliance, indicating a systematic approach to cooperation and integration efforts.

Alliance	The word encapsulates the collective identity and purpose of the Pacific Alliance, emphasizing solidarity and mutual support among member countries in pursuit of common objectives.
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Note. Author's own elaboration.

The most notable words in the Pacific Alliance declaration reflect its overarching goals of promoting regional integration, economic development, and cooperation among member countries, while also emphasizing the strategic significance of the Pacific region as a focal point for collaboration and partnership.

Geographical scope

The geographical focus of the Pacific Alliance primarily centers around the Pacific rim region of Latin America. The geographical proximity of these countries plays a crucial role in their shared interests and cooperation within the alliance.

Peru, Chile, Colombia, and Mexico came together to endorse the Lima Declaration in April 2011, signaling their intent to establish the Pacific Alliance. Subsequently, in June 2012, the four presidents solidified this commitment by officially establishing the alliance through a pact. Unlike previous regional agreements such as UNASUR, ALBA, and CELAC, which primarily focused on regional issues, the Pacific Alliance stands out for its aim to enhance cooperation among member countries with a specific emphasis on strengthening ties with the Asia-Pacific region. While UNASUR, ALBA, and CELAC approached regionalism and integration as means to counteract globalization, the Pacific Alliance views them as vital mechanisms for engaging with global dynamics (Valladares & Calderón, 2019).

The Pacific area is a dynamic and economically vibrant region encompassing countries bordering the Pacific Ocean, including those in Asia, North America, and Oceania, as stated in the 2011 declaration (Pacific Alliance, 2011):

“Confirming our willingness to contribute to the consolidation of the Latin American Pacific as a space for convergence, as well as a mechanism for political dialogue and projection with the Asia-Pacific region” (Pacific Alliance, 2011, p. 1).

As the declaration suggests, one of the key objectives of the Pacific Alliance is to capitalize on the economic opportunities presented by the growing markets and trade networks in Asia-Pacific countries. Enhanced connectivity with Asia-Pacific economies can facilitate increased trade flows, investment, and economic growth for Pacific Alliance member states.

“Ratifying our commitment to privilege integration as an effective instrument to improve the social development of our people, promote entrepreneurial capabilities and move towards a broad space that is more attractive for investment and trade in goods and services, so that project our countries with greater competitiveness, especially towards the Asia Pacific region” (Pacific Alliance, 2011, p. 1).

The Pacific Alliance member countries benefit from their strategic location for international trade and investment. Access to the Pacific Ocean provides maritime connectivity, facilitating the movement of goods and services between the Americas and Asia. Additionally, the Pacific Alliance serves as a gateway for investment flows into Latin America, attracting investors seeking access to regional markets and resources. Subsequently, Lima’s Declaration reaffirms its Asia-Pacific focus in the following statement:

“To establish the Pacific Alliance in order to build up an area of deep integration within the framework of the Latin American Pacific framework, which encourages regional integration, as well as greater growth, development and competitiveness of our economies” (Pacific Alliance, 2011, p. 2).

While the Pacific Alliance focuses on Pacific Rim connectivity, it is also part of broader regional integration efforts in Latin America. The member countries are actively engaged in various regional forums and organizations, such as the Latin American Integration Association (ALADI) and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), the aim of which is to promote economic, social, and political cooperation among Latin American countries.

Socioeconomic development

The Pacific Alliance has been instrumental in promoting trade liberalization among its member countries. Through the elimination of tariffs and other trade barriers, the alliance

aims to facilitate the flow of goods and services within the region, promoting economic growth and competitiveness. This focus on trade integration fosters the idea of economic development by expanding market access for businesses and increasing opportunities for international trade.

“Build in a participatory and consensual way an area of deep integration to move progressively towards the free mobility of goods, services, resources and people... to drive further growth, development and competitiveness of the economies of its members, focused on achieving greater well-being, overcoming socioeconomic inequality and promote the social inclusion of its inhabitants” (Pacific Alliance, 2011, p. 2).

The Pacific Alliance encourages investment promotion and entrepreneurship as key drivers of socioeconomic development. Member countries collaborate to create a favourable business environment, attract foreign investment, and support the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises. By fostering innovation, productivity, and job creation, the alliance contributes to economic diversification and prosperity.

“Members maintain a network of trade agreements with each other and with the most developed and dynamic world economies. The Pacific Alliance promotes commercial, investment, innovation, and technology exchange with the most competitive economies of the world”. (Pacific Alliance, 2011, p. 3).

As the statement suggests, the Pacific Alliance recognizes the importance of human capital development and education in driving socioeconomic progress. Member countries collaborate on initiatives to enhance education and skills training, promote innovation, and strengthen research and development capabilities. By investing in human capital, the alliance seeks to empower individuals, increase productivity, and foster inclusive growth.

Finally, the Lima declaration expresses the PA approach on environmental sustainability and green growth which are topics increasingly prioritized within the Pacific Alliance discourse. Member countries recognize the importance of environmental conservation, climate action, and sustainable development practices in promoting long-term prosperity. By embracing

green technologies, promoting renewable energy, and adopting sustainable practices, the alliance seeks to contribute to environmental protection and resilience to climate change.

Democracy strengthening

The member countries of the Pacific Alliance share a commitment to democratic governance. They uphold principles such as free and fair elections, separation of powers, checks and balances, and government accountability. Democratic governance ensures that political decisions reflect the will of the people and are made transparently and inclusively.

“Confirming our willingness to contribute to the consolidation of the Latin American Pacific as a space of convergence, as well as a mechanism for political dialogue and projection with the Asia Pacific region... The progress of our countries in terms of development and inclusive economic growth, through the creation of productive employment, the reduction of poverty and the strengthening of democracy”. (Pacific Alliance, 2011, p. 1).

Human rights and civil liberties are integral to the democratic focus of the Pacific Alliance. Member countries are committed to upholding fundamental rights and freedoms, including freedom of speech, assembly, and association, as well as the protection of minority rights and the rights of vulnerable groups. The alliance condemns any violations of human rights and works to promote a culture of respect for human dignity and equality.

In addition, PA supports the development and strengthening of democratic institutions and processes within its member countries. This includes promoting electoral integrity, strengthening parliamentary oversight, enhancing public participation in decision-making, and supporting the development of civil society organizations that contribute to democratic governance (Pacific Alliance, 2011)

Visegrad Group

The first V4 declaration under analysis was *"Declaration on Cooperation between the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, the Republic of Poland and the Republic of Hungary in Striving for European Integration"* (Visegrad Group, 1991). It encapsulated the collaborative aspirations and shared objectives of the signatory nations towards fostering regional

Interpreting the use of the words above provided insight into the key themes and priorities emphasized within the text:

Table 7. V4 key themes and priorities

Word	Observations
Countries	A focus on the collective interests and actions of the member states. It highlights the importance of cooperation and collaboration in pursuit of common goals related to regional integration and development.
Economic	It suggests strong emphasis on fostering economic growth, trade liberalization, and investment promotion as integral components of regional integration efforts.
National	The importance of preserving and respecting national identities and sovereignty. It acknowledges the unique characteristics and aspirations of each nation while promoting cooperation and solidarity among them.
Free	The word "free" appears frequently in the context of promoting freedom of movement, trade, and information exchange. It reflects a commitment to creating a conducive environment for free enterprise, open markets, and the free flow of goods, services, and ideas across national borders.
Values	A commitment to upholding shared principles and ideals, such as democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. It highlights the importance of aligning policies and actions with fundamental values that underpin European integration and cooperation.
Rights	Ensuring that all individuals enjoy equal rights and opportunities, regardless of their background or status.
Development	A focus on fostering sustainable economic, social, and political development within the signatory countries and the broader Central European region. It reflects a commitment to improving living standards, reducing inequalities, and promoting inclusive growth.
Cooperation	Addressing common challenges and seizing shared opportunities requires coordinated action and solidarity among nations.

Political	It stresses the importance of political dialogue, consensus-building, and institutional reforms to advance common objectives.
Spiritual	The cultural and historical dimensions of cooperation. It acknowledges the role of shared cultural heritage, traditions, and values in fostering mutual understanding, social cohesion, and identity formation within the Central European region.

Note. Author's own elaboration.

The data above shows the complex nature of the declaration, which holds a geographical focus, addressing the values and democratic views of the cooperation among the signatory countries.

Geographical scope

Historically, Central Europe has been a crossroads of different cultures, languages, and political influences. Thus, the V4 share a common historical experience, including periods of rule under the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Habsburg Monarchy, and the influence of neighbouring powers such as Prussia and Russia (Visegrad group, n.d.).

Following the collapse of communism in Central and Eastern Europe in 1989, the Visegrad countries embarked on a path of democratic transition and economic transformation. Geopolitically, the V4 occupies a strategically important position within Europe, serving as a bridge between Eastern and Western Europe. Their geographical location has implications for issues such as energy security, transportation networks, and migration flows, which are of mutual concern to the member states.

Through various joint initiatives and projects, the Visegrad countries seek to enhance economic development, cultural exchange, and security cooperation within Central Europe and beyond, as stated in the 1991 Visegrad Declaration (Visegrad group, 1991):

“...in accordance with the interests of the particular countries they shall harmonize their activities to shape cooperation and close contacts with European institutions and shall hold regular consultations on the matters of their security, they shall endeavor to create free contacts between citizens, institutions, churches and social organizations, and they shall focus on the development of the infrastructure in communications, with regard both to links between the three countries and those with other parts of Europe, mainly in the north-south direction...”
(Visegrad Group, 1991, para. 7).

From the statements in the V4 Declaration on Cooperation several key points can be analyzed. First, the declaration emphasizes the commitment to harmonize V4 activities in pursuit of European integration. This indicated a shared goal to align their policies and approaches to better integrate with European institutions and frameworks.

Second, the V4 countries pledge to hold regular consultations on security issues. This demonstrates a recognition of the importance of cooperation in security matters, possibly to address common security challenges and enhance regional stability.

Third, the declaration emphasizes open communication and collaboration across various sectors of society, which can contribute to building stronger ties and facilitating integration processes.

In addition, a significant aspect highlighted in the declaration is the focus on infrastructure development, particularly in communications. This includes improving links between Visegrad member states and other parts of Europe, with an emphasis on the north-south direction. Such infrastructure development aims to enhance connectivity, facilitate trade and mobility, and strengthen economic ties between the countries and the broader European region.

Values

The values of democracy, freedom, sovereignty, integration, regional cooperation, cultural heritage, tolerance, and respect for diversity are integral to the history and identity of the Visegrad Group. These values guide the group's actions and serve as a foundation for cooperation and solidarity among its member states in the pursuit of common goals, as can be seen in the following excerpt (Visegrad group, n.d.):

“...Drawing on universal human values as the most important element of the European heritage and own national identities should serve as the basis for developing a society of people cooperating with each other in a harmonious way, tolerant to each other, to individual families, local, regional and national communities, free of hatred, nationalism, xenophobia, and local strife...” (Visegrad Group, 1991, para. 9).

The 1991 declaration rightly recognizes universal human values as a crucial element of European heritage and national identities. Emphasizing these values can promote a sense of shared humanity and solidarity, transcending cultural, ethnic, and national boundaries. It also advocates for a society where people cooperate with each other in a harmonious way and are tolerant towards diverse individuals, families, and communities. This emphasis on tolerance and cooperation is essential for

building inclusive societies where all individuals can live with dignity and respect, regardless of their backgrounds.

By condemning hatred, nationalism, xenophobia, and local strife, the declaration takes a firm stance against divisive and discriminatory attitudes and behaviours. This reflected V4 commitment to combating prejudice, discrimination, and violence based on factors such as ethnicity, nationality, or religion.

Democracy

The excerpt below outlines several fundamental objectives shared by the Visegrad group founders. The declaration highlights the shared objectives of the three countries, including the restitution of state independence, democracy, freedom, and the elimination of totalitarian aspects from their societies. These objectives reflect a desire to move away from oppressive systems and towards systems based on democratic principles and respect for individual rights (Visegrad group, 1991).

“The similarity of the situation that has evolved over the past decades has determined for these three countries convergent basic objectives: full restitution of state independence, democracy and freedom, elimination of all existing social, economic and spiritual aspects of the totalitarian system, construction of a parliamentary democracy, a modern State of Law, respect for human rights and freedoms, creation of a modern free market economy, full involvement in the European political and economic system, as well as the system of security and legislation.”
(Visegrad Group, 1991, para. 2).

There is an emphasis on constructing parliamentary democracy and a modern State of Law which might indicate a commitment to democratic governance and the rule of law. This commitment is essential for safeguarding individual dignity, promoting social justice, and fostering inclusive societies where all individuals can thrive without fear of discrimination or oppression.

The declaration also highlights the aspiration to create a modern free-market economy. This suggests a desire to promote economic growth, innovation, and prosperity through market-oriented policies. However, it was essential to ensure that such economic development was inclusive and addressed socio-economic disparities.

Self-definition

According to the V4 1991 declaration, the Visegrad group was not created to rival existing European integration efforts or Central European structures. Instead, it asserts that the V4 aims to promote cooperation with all countries, including neighbours, with the overarching goal of fostering democratic development across Europe (Visegrad group, 1991):

“The V4 was not created as an alternative to the all-European integration efforts, nor does it try to compete with the existing functional Central European structures. Its activities are in no way aimed at isolation or the weakening of ties with the other countries. On the contrary the Group aims at encouraging optimum cooperation with all countries, in particular its neighbours, its ultimate interest being the democratic development in all parts of Europe”. (Visegrad Group, 1991, para. 5).

Critically, while the declaration highlights the cultural and historical unity of the V4 countries, it may oversimplify the complexities of their relationships and histories. By framing the V4 as a harmonious entity with shared goals, it may obscure underlying tensions or divergent interests among member states.

Additionally, while the declaration emphasizes cooperation with neighbouring countries and the broader European community, it does not provide specific strategies or initiatives to achieve this goal, leaving the practical implications of the V4's cooperative stance somewhat vague.

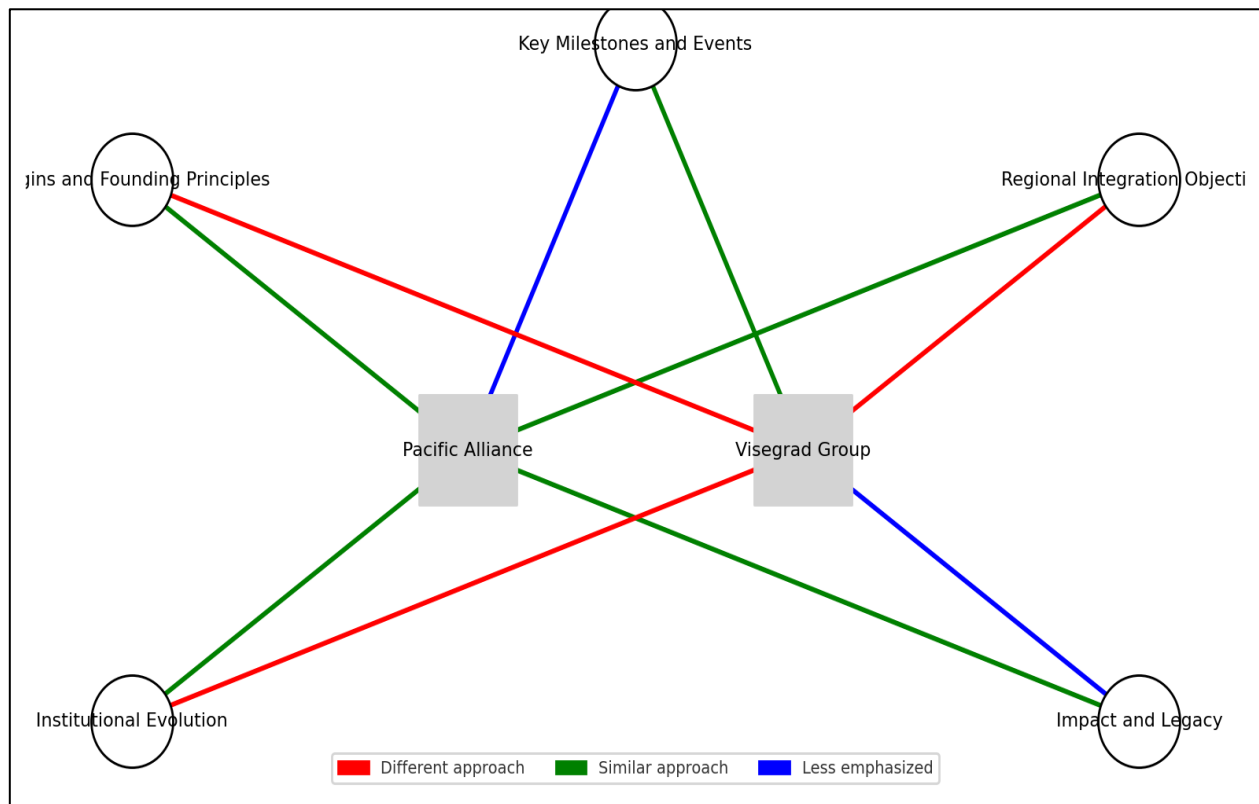
Furthermore, the declaration's assertion that the V4 is not aimed at isolation or weakening ties with other countries may be viewed sceptically considering certain actions or statements by V4 member states that have been interpreted as challenging EU norms or values. Critics may argue that while the V4 professes a commitment to European unity and cooperation, its actions sometimes diverge from this rhetoric, leading to tensions within the EU and among member states.

In general, while the declaration articulates lofty ideals of cultural unity, European integration, and cooperation, it may be subject to criticism for its potential to oversimplify complex geopolitical dynamics and its lack of concrete proposals for achieving its stated objectives.

5.2.1 Historical Dimension Comparison

Figure 8 presents a visual representation of the comparative analysis conducted between the Pacific Alliance and the Visegrad Group based on the examination of seven texts (Visegrad group, n.d.). Through this analysis, insights are gleaned into the alignment and disparities in the approaches of these two regional alliances across various categories. The colors employed in the figure indicate the levels of congruence between the Pacific Alliance and the Visegrad Group's positions on different issues. By examining the areas of similarity, difference, and relative emphasis, valuable insights are obtained into the nuanced dynamics shaping the discourse within these regional cooperation frameworks.

Figure 8. PA and V4 Historical categories comparison.



Note: Visualization generated with Discourse Network Analyzer (DNA) software.

The figure depicts the results of the discourse analysis comparing the approaches of the Pacific Alliance and the Visegrad Group across various categories. It is important to note that congruence occurs when both alliances either reject or support a concept. For example, if both the Pacific

Alliance and the Visegrad Group reject a particular policy proposal or support a specific initiative, it would be depicted as congruent in the figure.

In areas highlighted in red, the Pacific Alliance and the Visegrad Group exhibit divergent stances or approaches. This could indicate significant disparities in their perspectives, priorities, or policies within those categories.

The green areas signify instances where both the Pacific Alliance and the Visegrad Group share similar or congruent approaches. This suggests alignment or agreement in their positions, indicating common ground or shared perspectives on certain issues.

Blue sections indicate that both alliances have a relatively lower emphasis in those specific categories. This could suggest that these areas are less central to their discourse or that they exhibit less interest or involvement compared to other topics.

By exploring the key dimensions illustrated, insights are unveiled into the nuanced dynamics that define these alliances and their profound implications for regional development, stability, and global engagement, as table 8 shows:

Table 8: PA and V4 Historical dimension comparison.

Category	Pacific Alliance	Visegrad Group
Origin and Founding Principles	<p>The Pacific Alliance was established in 2011, with founding principles of promoting economic integration, trade liberalization, and convergence of regulatory frameworks among its member countries, with a focus on Latin America and the Asia-Pacific region.</p> <p>The Pacific Alliance defines itself as a progressive integration mechanism aimed at promoting</p>	<p>The Visegrad Group was founded based on the Visegrad Declaration in 1991, with founding principles of fostering cooperation, democracy, and economic development among Central European countries after the fall of communism.</p> <p>The Visegrad Group defines itself as a platform for cooperation and solidarity</p>

	<p>economic development, social inclusion, and regional cooperation among its member countries, with a focus on convergence and competitiveness.</p>	<p>among Central European countries, with a focus on shared history, culture, and values.</p>
<p>Regional Integration Objectives</p>	<p>The Pacific Alliance seeks to deepen economic, political, and social integration among its member countries, with a focus on trade liberalization, investment promotion, and convergence of regulatory frameworks.</p> <p>The Pacific Alliance prioritizes economic integration, aiming for the free movement of goods, services, capital, and people among member countries, along with harmonization of regulations and policies to enhance competitiveness.</p>	<p>The Visegrad Group aims to strengthen regional cooperation and solidarity among Central European countries, particularly in the areas of economic development, security, and cultural exchange.</p> <p>The Visegrad Group focuses on economic cooperation, including trade liberalization, infrastructure development, and investment promotion, with a focus on intra-regional trade.</p>
<p>Key Milestones and Events</p>	<p>Key milestones include the establishment of the alliance in 2011 and the signing of the Additional Protocol in 2014. Annual summits and ministerial meetings are key events for member countries.</p>	<p>Key milestones include the signing of the Visegrad Declaration in 1991 and the accession of V4 countries to the EU in 2004. Regular summits and ministerial meetings are significant events.</p>

	<p>The Pacific Alliance aims to strengthen ties with the Asia-Pacific region through trade agreements, investment partnerships, and diplomatic dialogue, recognizing the region's economic importance.</p>	<p>The Visegrad Group's focus is primarily on European integration and cooperation, with limited direct involvement with the Asia-Pacific region.</p>
<p>Institutional Evolution</p>	<p>The Pacific Alliance has a more recent institutional evolution, starting as a trade bloc and evolving into an integration mechanism with summits, ministerial meetings, and technical committees.</p> <p>While some Pacific Alliance members have trade agreements with the EU, harmonization with EU regulations is not a primary objective, as the focus is on regional integration within Latin America and the Asia-Pacific region.</p>	<p>The Visegrad Group has evolved from a forum for regional cooperation into a formalized institutional framework with regular summits, ministerial meetings, and working groups.</p> <p>The Visegrad Group countries are all EU members and prioritize harmonization with EU regulations and policies as part of their European integration efforts.</p>
<p>Impact and Legacy</p>	<p>The Pacific Alliance has facilitated increased trade and investment flows among member countries and enhanced their visibility on the global stage, contributing to economic growth and integration in Latin America.</p>	<p>The Visegrad Group has contributed to enhancing regional cooperation and solidarity among Central European countries and played a role in their EU accession process.</p>

	<p>PA has focused on trade liberalization, market integration, and fostering ties with the Asia-Pacific region. It has made progress in reducing tariffs, harmonizing regulations, and facilitating trade and investment flows among member countries.</p>	<p>V4 has concentrated on enhancing regional security, cooperation in defense matters, economic development, and cultural exchange within Central Europe. It has also sought to strengthen its collective voice within the European Union on issues of common interest.</p>
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Note. Author's own elaboration.

In summary, while both the Pacific Alliance and the Visegrad Group are regional cooperation frameworks aiming to enhance integration and collaboration among member states, they operate in different geographical contexts, have distinct historical origins, and focus on different priority areas based on the needs and interests of their member countries.

5.3 Cooperation Dimension

Research question 2: What are the similarities and differences in the communication patterns and discursive dynamics among the member states of the Pacific Alliance and the Visegrad Group? What factors contribute to these variations, and how do they influence the internal dynamics of cooperation in each group?

To examine the discourse of the Pacific Alliance (PA) and the Visegrad Group (V4) in relation to their patterns of cooperation over the past five years, several thematic categories were identified. These categories highlight how each regional project has articulated its priorities, managed challenges, and advanced collaboration, thereby revealing trends and variations in their regional integration efforts.

Figure 9. Discourse analysis: Cooperation categories.



Source: Compiled by the author.

These five categories balance internal dynamics (identity, sovereignty, trade) with external positioning (geopolitics, partnerships) while also keeping room for crisis-driven discourse.

Pacific Alliance

Among the Pacific Alliance declarations examined, key milestones include the XIV Summit Declaration in Lima (2019)⁶, the Declaration of Santiago (2020)⁷, and the XVI Summit Declaration in Bahía Málaga-Buenaventura (2022)⁸. These texts collectively outline the Alliance's cooperative agenda, from expanding membership and strengthening external partnerships, to addressing the

⁶ <https://www.minrel.gob.cl/minrel/noticias-antiores/declaracion-de-lima-xiv-cumbre-de-la-alianza-del-pacifico>

⁷ <https://alianzapacifico.net/en/with-declaration-on-gender-equality-and-the-digital-market-of-the-bloc-concludes-the-pacific-alliance-summit/>

⁸ <https://alianzapacifico.net/en/pacific-alliance-singapore/>

Interpreting the use of the words above provided insight into the key themes and priorities emphasized within the text:

Table 9: PA key themes and priorities.

Word	Observations
Cooperation	<p>Cooperation framed around dialogue with observers (e.g., Ecuador).</p> <p>Explicitly tied to solidarity and recovery from COVID-19.</p> <p>Institutionalized through work plans, ad-hoc groups, and Singapore partnership.</p>
Integration	<p>Focus on internal cohesion of the Alliance.</p> <p>Integration emphasized as resilience-building.</p> <p>Linked to trade facilitation and cross-border flows of goods, services, and people.</p>
Trade	<p>Secondary theme, tied to growth and competitiveness.</p> <p>Framed as essential for sustainable recovery.</p> <p>Central theme, marked by FTA with Singapore.</p>
Development	<p>Linked to inclusive regional growth.</p> <p>Framed as socio-economic recovery post-pandemic.</p> <p>Tied to sustainable trade and sectoral collaboration.</p>
Resilience	<p>Minimal emphasis.</p> <p>Central in response to pandemic shocks.</p> <p>Linked to economic competitiveness and institutional strengthening.</p> <p>Emerg ed during COVID-19 as a lasting theme in PA discourse.</p>

Solidarity	<p>Implied in dialogue with observers.</p> <p>Strongly articulated as a unifying value in crisis recovery.</p> <p>Less explicit, replaced by structured cooperation terms.</p> <p>Peaks in 2020 as a pandemic response discourse, then recedes.</p>
Sustainability	<p>Mentioned around climate change cooperation.</p> <p>Stronger, tied to biodiversity and renewable energy.</p> <p>Framed within sustainable trade and sectoral innovation.</p>
Prosperity	<p>Framed as shared prosperity through cooperation.</p> <p>Linked to recovery and poverty reduction.</p> <p>Embedded in discourse of competitiveness and growth.</p> <p>Consistent theme of mutual prosperity, reframed with each crisis/opportunity.</p>
Innovation	<p>Emerging in references to technology and digital economy.</p> <p>Connected to recovery and adaptation in digital sectors.</p> <p>Explicitly emphasized in cooperation sectors (technology, digital economy, infrastructure).</p> <p>Grows steadily as a core cooperation theme, especially in 2022.</p>
Partnership	<p>Limited to regional observers (e.g., Ecuador).</p> <p>Strengthened through solidarity language.</p> <p>Institutionalized with Singapore as first Partner State.</p>

Note. Author's own elaboration.

Between 2019 and 2023, the Pacific Alliance witnessed the expansion of its membership with the inclusion of new observer countries and dialogue partners, such as Costa Rica, Guatemala, and Panama. The expansion reflected the alliance's growing relevance and influence in Latin America promoting social and cultural exchange among member countries focused on dialogue,

cooperation, and understanding. Programs to enhance educational exchanges, promote tourism, and celebrate cultural diversity contributed to building closer ties and a sense of shared identity within the alliance (Pacific Alliance, n.d.). Considering the objectives established in the Framework Agreement of the Pacific Alliance⁹ signed in Paran , Antofagasta, Republic of Chile, on June 6, 2012. Article 3, point 1 and subsection b) the agreement established the main objective on Education:

“To promote greater growth, development and competitiveness of the economies of the Parties, with a view to achieving greater well-being, overcoming socioeconomic inequality and the social inclusion of their inhabitants” (Pacific Alliance, 2012, para. 5)

There is also The Pacific Alliance Education for Employment Program (Pacific Alliance EFE program, n.d.) which focuses on sustainable development and skills training for employment within the extractive sector in Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and Peru. The program operates on two main principles. Firstly, it aims to establish institutional partnerships to provide technical assistance and support for skills development among marginalized local labor forces, enabling them to access job opportunities and lift themselves out of poverty.

Secondly, it aims to enhance governance within the extractive sector through technical assistance and knowledge-sharing initiatives between Canadian and Pacific Alliance stakeholders, including representatives from the private and public sectors, environmental and indigenous communities, to promote best practices and address legal, environmental, socio-economic, and community-related issues.

The declaration suggests the program has positive elements such as skills development and knowledge sharing, although critical examination is necessary to address potential challenges such as industry bias, environmental impacts, and limited scope. Efforts should be made to ensure that the program promotes sustainable development and benefits local communities and ecosystems in the long term.

⁹ https://www.dof.gob.mx/nota_detalle.php?codigo=5400952&fecha=17/07/2015#gsc.tab=0

In response to climate change and the impacts of the 2019 pandemic, the Pacific Alliance emphasized regional cooperation on environmental sustainability, implementing initiatives to promote renewable energy and protect biodiversity. These collaborative efforts to address shared environmental challenges have become significant milestones for the alliance. For instance, during the XIV Summit held in Lima, Peru, in 2019, leaders engaged in discussions on key issues shaping the Alliance's future. At this event, the President of Ecuador was invited to participate as an observer, highlighting the Alliance's commitment to inclusive regional dialogue.

During this summit, the presidents endorsed the Declaration of Santiago (2021), expressing deep regret for the loss of numerous lives in the region, the vast unemployment, and the rise in poverty resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. They reaffirmed their dedication to collaborating in overcoming the economic and social repercussions of the pandemic (Embassy of Chile in Singapore, n.d.).

“Our commitment to continue working together to recover from the effects of COVID-19 and to overcome its negative economic and social impacts, protecting the lives of our peoples, safeguarding their health, strengthening cooperation between our countries, and promoting an inclusive and sustainable economic recovery that offers new opportunities for our peoples”. (Pacific Alliance, 2020, p. 1)

The declaration begins with an acknowledgment of the COVID-19 pandemic's profound impact, expressing solidarity and commitment to recovery. Cooperation initiatives to address pandemic-related challenges, such as support for affected sectors and poverty reduction efforts, are accentuated. Democratic values and the importance of free trade for sustainable development are emphasized, along with efforts towards regional integration and expansion (Pacific Alliance, 2021):

“Our respect for democracy, the separation of powers and the rule of law, as well as the protection and promotion of human rights, which are the foundations on which our joint work towards deep integration is based”. (Pacific Alliance, 2020, p. 1)

The statement above could be viewed as overlooking potential challenges and negative consequences associated with unrestricted free trade, such as environmental degradation,

exploitation of labour, and exacerbation of economic inequalities. However, the declaration concludes by reflecting on the overarching focus on addressing shared challenges, promoting regional cooperation, and advancing sustainable development goals through collaborative efforts among member countries.

Within the framework of the XVI Summit of Presidents of the Pacific Alliance, held on January 26th, 2022, in Bahía Málaga-Buenaventura, Colombia, the Ministers of Foreign Trade of Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Peru and the Minister of Foreign Trade of Singapore signed a Free Trade Agreement.

The signing of this agreement marks a milestone for this integration initiative because Singapore will become the first Partner State of the Pacific Alliance. One important aspect of this declaration is its emphasis on free trade as a means to enhance competitiveness, resilience, and socio-economic development, as the following statement shows (Pacific Alliance, 2021):

“Convinced of the importance of free trade for improving competitiveness and resilience and fostering sustainable socio-economic development and social inclusion in their countries”.
(Pacific Alliance, 2022, p. 1)

While free trade can bring benefits such as increased economic growth and job creation, it can also lead to challenges such as income inequality and environmental degradation if not managed properly. The declaration does not address how the participating countries plan to mitigate these potential negative consequences.

Another point of analysis is the declaration's focus on enhancing cooperation in specific sectors such as food, infrastructure, technology, and the digital economy. Collaboration in these areas can lead to mutual benefits and innovation, however, there is a risk of neglecting other important sectors or overlooking the needs of certain communities within the participating countries. It would be beneficial for the declaration to include provisions for ensuring inclusive growth and addressing the needs of marginalized groups.

Furthermore, the declaration mentions the establishment of meetings, joint work plans, and ad-hoc working groups to facilitate cooperation between the Pacific Alliance and Singapore. Guidelines

on how decisions will be made, how progress will be monitored, and how conflicts of interest are not the focus of the declaration.

Visegrad Group

Among the Visegrad Group declarations analyzed, notable milestones include the series of joint declarations on migration since 2019, the 2020 Joint Statement on the Future of the Eastern Partnership¹⁰, and the 2020 Joint Statement of the V4 with Germany¹¹. These texts collectively reflect the group's cooperative agenda, emphasizing regional security, crisis management, and geopolitical positioning within the European Union and beyond. Each declaration highlights recurring themes such as migration and border security, sovereignty, solidarity, resilience, and regional cooperation that shape the V4's discourse. Figure 11 illustrates the most prominent words found in these documents, providing insight into how the Visegrad Group has framed cooperation as a means of safeguarding sovereignty, managing crises, and reinforcing its strategic role within Europe.

Figure 11. Visegrad Group Declarations (2019-2023) Word Cloud.



Source: Generated from <https://simplewordcloud.com/>

¹⁰ https://mzv.gov.cz/public/b9/f7/37/3937846_2355773_V4_Joint_Statement.docx

¹¹

https://mzv.gov.cz/jnp/en/issues_and_press/archive/statements/x2020/x2020_03_13_joint_statement_of_the_ministers_of.html

From the Visegrad Group declarations examined, the ten most consistently recurring themes are:

Table 10: V4 key themes and priorities.

Word	Observations
Migration	Opposition to mandatory quotas, emphasis on external borders, return procedures, and asylum management.
Sovereignty	Protecting state authority within the EU framework, resisting imposed measures.
Solidarity	Voluntary rather than mandatory burden-sharing, diverse forms of solidarity.
Resilience	Strengthening democratic, economic, societal, security, environmental, and humanitarian resilience, particularly during COVID-19.
Regional Cooperation	Support for reforms and partnerships in Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans.
Civil Society	Promoting youth initiatives, dialogue, and inclusive policy development.
Pandemic Management	Healthcare coordination, border closures, socio-economic recovery measures.
Geopolitical Positioning	Relations with Russia (support for Ukraine, non-recognition of the annexation of Crimea), China, the US, and Africa.
Security	Addressing cyber-attacks, information security, and civil disaster cooperation.
Identity	Celebrating the 30th anniversary of the V4 and 20 years of the International Visegrad Fund, reinforcing regional identity.

Note. Author's own elaboration.

These ten themes capture the discursive priorities of the V4: balancing internal sovereignty with regional/EU-level commitments and expanding their geopolitical and security agenda while also responding to crises like COVID-19. Within this broader agenda, one issue stands out as a recurring point of contestation: migration. As debates over borders, identity, and security intensified across

the EU, the V4's emphasis on sovereignty and crisis management became particularly visible in their positioning on migration policy.

The Visegrad Group, particularly Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia, has been at the forefront of debates within the European Union regarding migration policy. The group's opposition to mandatory migrant quotas and advocacy for stricter border controls have stressed its commitment to national sovereignty and border security. Since 2019 there have been 22 joint declarations addressing the topic of migration (Visegrad Group, n.d). In 2022, the V4 held a position regarding the reform of the EU New Pact on Migration and Asylum (Visegrad Group, 2020):

“The main goal of the reform is to set up the framework for the European asylum and migration management system in a comprehensive, sustainable, efficient, safe and crisis-resilient form. Whereas some proposals from the Pact are supported by all Member States, diverging views persist on the others. The Member States need to act together and develop a system which will be acceptable to all of them and feasible in practice”.

During the analysis of this declaration several key ideas regarding migration emerged. First, the declaration points to the need for a comprehensive, sustainable, efficient, safe, and crisis-resilient framework for managing asylum and migration in Europe. It emphasizes the importance of anticipating migration developments, strengthening external borders, and providing international protection to those in need while ensuring rapid returns for others.

Second, the document highlights broad agreement among member states on the significance of the external dimension in addressing migration challenges. It advocates targeted measures to address root causes of migration, enhance cooperation with key origin and transit countries, and explore the possibility of establishing regional disembarkation platforms outside the EU.

Third, the V4 joint position stresses the importance of the strong and durable protection of EU external borders and the Schengen area. It calls for effective implementation of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency's mandate, development of EU IT systems, and establishment of new pre-entry procedures to enhance border management and security.

Fourth, while acknowledging the need for solidarity in managing migration crises, the document emphasizes the importance of flexibility and a wide range of solidarity measures. It highlights the

external dimension and border protection efforts as expressions of solidarity and emphasizes voluntary relocation or admission of migrants, rejecting the forced implementation of instruments.

Lastly, while recognizing the importance of addressing challenges along Mediterranean migratory routes, the joint position calls for strengthened cooperation with countries in North Africa and the Western Balkans. It emphasizes the need to consider risks of migratory pressure via other routes, such as the EU's Eastern Border, and advocates for solutions that take into account instabilities in neighbouring countries.

Like other EU member states, Visegrad Group countries grappled with the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The group's response to the crisis, including coordination efforts on healthcare, border closures, and economic stimulus measures, showed both cooperation and divergence in approaches to managing the crisis. For example, in the 2020 V4 Joint Statement on the Future of the Eastern Partnership member countries agreed as follows:

“We support the reallocation of 140 mil. € of immediate help and other 700 mil. € prepared for the mitigation of socioeconomic impact of coronavirus crisis in the Eastern Partnership countries by the EU. As the V4, we have decided that we will launch an extraordinary „V4EastSolidarity program” for the EaP countries under the International Visegrad Fund, with a simplified procedure dedicated to the practical strengthening of the health, social, economic resilience of the groups of citizens of the EaP countries affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences”.

The document highlights the assistance to build resilient societies in the face of the pandemic. Resilience encompasses democratic, economic, societal, security, environmental, and humanitarian dimensions. Activities to strengthen resilience included building information security, addressing hybrid threats like cyber-attacks, and enhancing civil disaster cooperation and healthcare resilience.

In addition, the declaration emphasized the value of engaged civil society in working towards a better future. It acknowledged the contribution of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum to policy development and supported more people-to-people contacts and youth initiatives.

In 2020, Poland assumed the annual Presidency of the Visegrad Group (V4) amid the unprecedented COVID-19 crisis, which posed significant challenges to societies globally, as the following statement affirms (Visegrad Group, 2020):

“The COVID-19 epidemic confirmed both the labour market mismatch and the demand for key occupations and skills and the lack of social security for employees of so-called atypical forms of employment. During the Polish Presidency, the V4 may raise issues of automation and robotisation of employment and remote working. With regard to the update of the EU action plan in the area of digital education, it will be interesting to exchange within the V4 the experiences related to the need to switch to remote education and its implications for educational systems (also in connection with aspects of counteracting digital exclusion)”.

The response to the pandemic impacted the development of countries, regions, the EU, and the world at large, shaping the course of the Polish V4 Presidency. Cooperation among V4 countries was fundamental in addressing the pandemic's socio-economic effects and restoring normalcy in the region and the EU.

As the V4 celebrated its 30th anniversary and the 20th anniversary of the International Visegrad Fund during Poland's Presidency, there was a renewed focus on strengthening regional cooperation and achieving tangible progress, including changes in leadership, reducing tensions with neighbouring countries, and evolving relations with Russia and the United States, which have shaped the Visegrad Group's geopolitical positioning and influence within the region and the EU. This was stated in the joint Statement of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Visegrad Group and Germany in 2020 (Visegrad Group. 2020).

“With regard to the closest neighbourhood, Ministers confirmed the need for the EU to build mutual trust, to foster understanding and thus to remain a credible partner. Hence, the EU should efficiently make use of the adopted policies and instruments provided in order to give impetus for further transition and reforms strengthening stability and prosperity, regional cooperation, democracy and the respect for the rule of law as well as the protection of human rights including the rights of persons belonging to national minorities both in the Western Balkans and in the Eastern Partnership countries”.

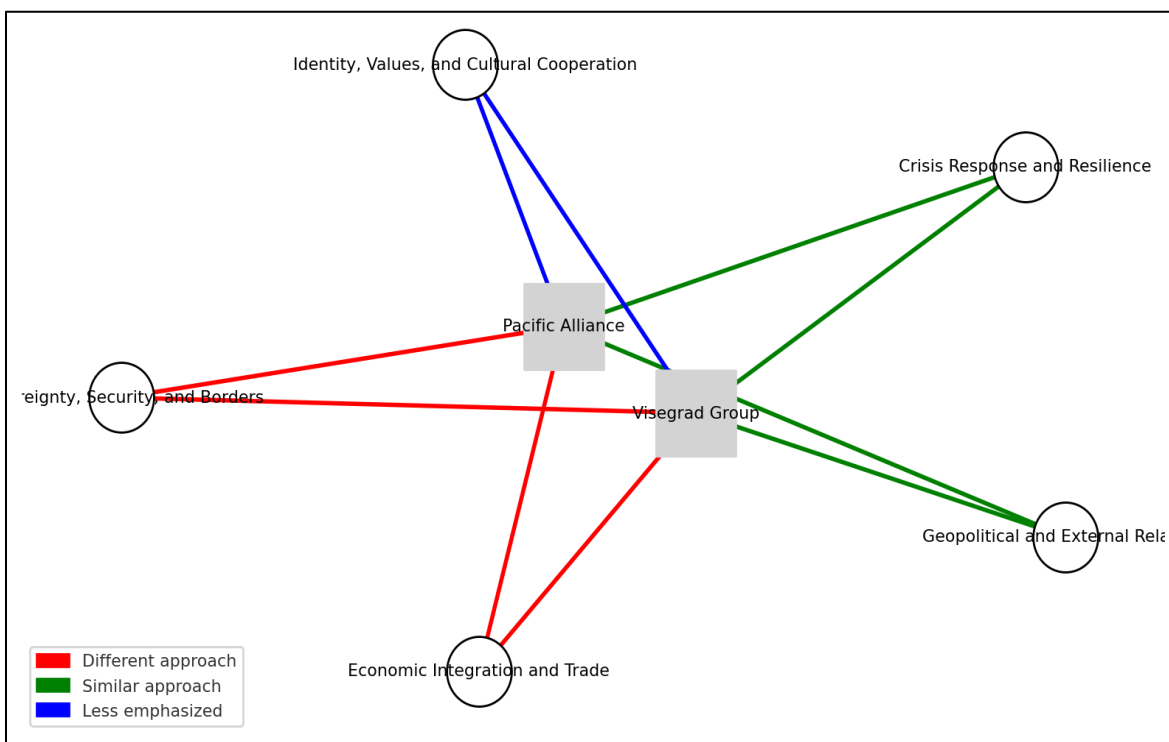
The joint statement stressed the importance of building mutual trust, fostering understanding, and supporting transition and reforms in the Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership countries. They also called for attention to socio-economic development, human rights, and security challenges in the southern neighbourhood and wider Middle East region. The declaration also advocated for deepening transatlantic cooperation, maintaining a strategic and balanced relationship with China, and strengthening EU-Africa cooperation.

Furthermore, the Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to non-recognition of the illegal annexation of Crimea, expressing concern over Russia's actions against democracy organizations, and supporting Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

5.3.1 Cooperation Dimension Comparison

Figure 12 showcases both the overlaps and the gaps in the cooperation agendas of the Pacific Alliance and the Visegrad Group. It shows that both groupings prioritize crisis management and resilience, as well as geopolitical and external participation, but diverge in how they address economic integration and trade on the one hand, and sovereignty, security, and border issues on the other. At the same time, identity, values, and cultural cooperation appear as more prominent themes for the Pacific Alliance, while they receive comparatively less emphasis in the Visegrad Group.

Figure 12. PA and V4 Cooperation Categories



Note: Visualization generated with Discourse Network Analyzer (DNA) Software

Although both groupings present themselves as regional coordination platforms, their cooperation patterns diverge in structurally meaningful ways. The Pacific Alliance’s trajectory is most visible through outward-oriented economic integration—expanding partnerships, deepening trade frameworks, and coupling these with softer forms of cooperation such as educational and cultural exchanges. The Visegrad Group, by contrast, concentrates cooperation around sovereignty-sensitive agendas inside the European Union, especially migration policy, border governance, and asylum management, with crisis coordination (notably during COVID-19) exposing both shared responses and internal divergence.

Framing the comparison through these categories (see table 11) allows the analysis to move from descriptive developments to a clearer assessment of strategic orientation and institutional implications. It highlights not only where the PA and V4 converge such as the need to manage shocks and protect societal resilience but also where they diverge sharply in priorities, external positioning, and the balance between material integration and normative or community-building cooperation.

Table. 11 PA and V4 Cooperation dimension comparison.

Category	Pacific Alliance	Visegrad Group
Economic Integration and Trade	Its trajectory is driven by market-opening and institutional deepening moves such as membership expansion and the FTA with Singapore, which signal external economic networking and rule-setting beyond the region.	does not appear to build new trade architecture in the same period; its cooperation is not framed around expanding trade regimes but around coordinating positions inside the EU. Economic issues show up mainly through crisis spillovers (socio-economic impacts of COVID-19) rather than as a primary integration project.
Sovereignty, Security, and Borders	Comparatively quiet on borders/security; its cooperation agenda is	Cooperation as defensive coordination: aligning national

	not organized around sovereignty contests but around economic and sectoral collaboration.	stances to shape EU outcomes and preserve national discretion.
Crisis Response and Resilience	less described as an arena of divergence and more as a context that reframes priorities recognizing that trade-led recovery needs inclusive growth and sustainability.	The crisis lens is tied to governance and societal resilience while also exposing internal fragmentation.
Identity, Values, and Cultural Cooperation	Shows more programmatic cooperation here: educational exchanges and cultural initiatives are concrete instruments aimed at dialogue, mutual understanding, and a thicker sense of community beyond trade.	Identity and values are not foregrounded in the cooperation data, even if identity narratives exist in broader V4 discourse, cooperation evidence is dominated by borders/migration and crisis management rather than by cultural cooperation mechanisms.
Geopolitical and External Relations	Look like proactive network diplomacy.	Look like intra-EU strategic coordination on high-salience political issues.

Note. Author's own elaboration.

In the cooperation dimension, the Pacific Alliance and the Visegrad Group follow different logics. The Pacific Alliance is driven mainly by economic integration and external partnerships, supported by concrete programs (including education and cultural exchanges) and a growing emphasis on making trade-led growth more inclusive and sustainable. The V4, in contrast, concentrates cooperation on sovereignty-sensitive issues inside the EU, especially migration, borders, and asylum, while COVID-19 showed both moments of coordination and clear internal divergence, making cooperation more contingent and agenda-narrow.

After mapping what each bloc does together, the next step is to examine how leaders talk about the grouping, how they legitimize cooperation, frame priorities, and how domestic politics shapes whether regional coordination becomes visible and sustained or fragmented and selective.

5.4 Political Actors Dimension

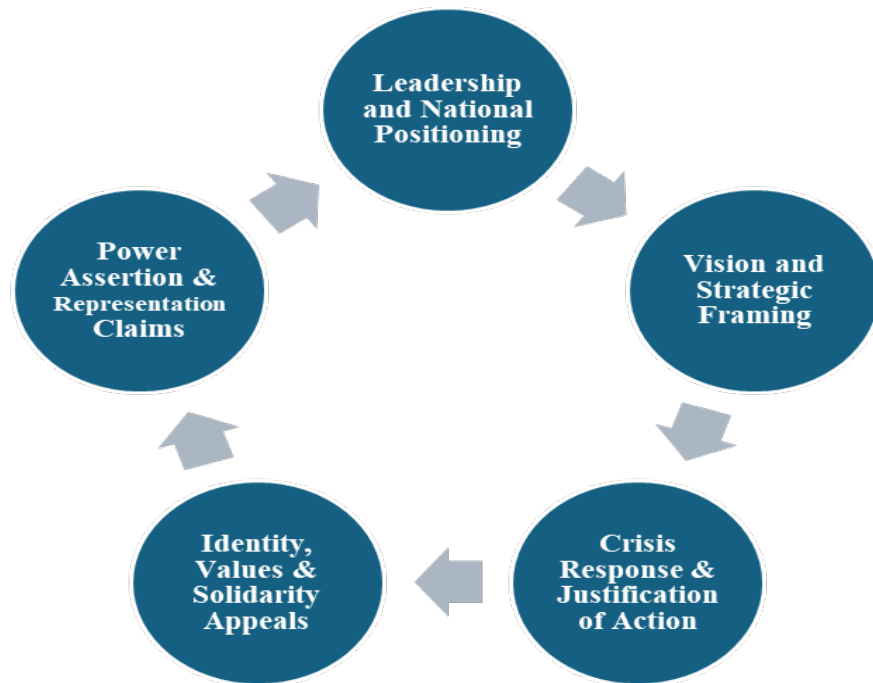
Research question 3: How do political leaders use discourse to influence decision-making and policy formulation within regional alliances?

This section focuses on analyzing the individual discourses produced by political leaders within the Pacific Alliance and the Visegrad Group. By examining speeches, statements, and social media interventions delivered personally by heads of state, or heads of government, this analysis seeks to uncover how leaders use their own voices, styles, and national perspectives to shape regional cooperation, influence policy formulation, and assert their vision for integration.

Unlike collective declarations that represent the negotiated consensus of member states, individual-level discourses provide insight into the personal leadership styles and rhetorical strategies of political figures (Fritzler, Howard & Wivel). How leaders position their countries within the broader regional context is examined below. The ways in which national priorities, values, and identities are projected onto the regional stage and how individual leaders seek to legitimize decisions, mobilize support, and address both domestic and regional audiences are also placed under scrutiny.

The categories selected for the political leaders' discourse analysis are:

Figure 13. PA and V4 Political actors discourse categories



Source: Compiled by author.

During the analysis of the data, it was noted that the PA and the V4 leaders often framed their discourse around five key themes. First, they assert national leadership and positioning, promoting their country's interests and values as exemplary within the region. Second, they employ vision and strategic framing to articulate long-term goals and inspire regional cooperation on issues like climate or the digital economy. Third, during crises, they focus on crisis response and policy justification, emphasizing urgency, resilience, and innovation. Fourth, they appeal to regional identity and shared values, invoking solidarity, unity, and democratic principles. Lastly, they make power and representation claims, asserting authority, challenging rival narratives, and aiming to shape the regional agenda.

Pacific Alliance

The first set of PA discourses under analysis comprises the interactions of Presidents Sebastián Piñera, Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO), Pedro Castillo, Gabriel Boric, and Gustavo Petro between 2020 and 2022. Together, these speeches and statements reveal the origins and founding principles of their narratives, grounded in democracy, solidarity, and regional unity. They also

Interpreting the use of the words above provided insight into the key themes and priorities emphasized within the text:

Table 12. PA leaders’ discourse key themes and priorities.

Word	Observations
Cooperation	Constantly invoked as the purpose of the Pacific Alliance: building collective action, strengthening unity, and maintaining institutional functionality.
Democracy	Central in AMLO’s refusal to hand over the presidency, Castillo’s discourse of democratic victimization, and Petro’s defense of popular sovereignty.
Recovery	Both Piñera and AMLO frame their interventions around crisis management, with emphasis on jobs, SMEs, and social protection.
Youth	Piñera places youth at the heart of recovery, presenting them as both victims of the pandemic and agents of transformation.
Justice	AMLO (anti-neoliberal stance, bottom-up recovery, anti-corruption) and Petro (class and ideological bias in leadership trials) foreground social equity.
Innovation	Piñera stresses the Fourth Industrial Revolution, innovation, and sustainable development as future-oriented goals.
Solidarity	A recurring term in speeches and tweets, often tied to democratic struggles (Castillo, Petro) or pandemic recovery (Piñera, AMLO).
Leadership	Chile (under Piñera and Boric) frames itself as a facilitator constructive in summits, neutral in the pro tempore crisis.
Legitimacy	AMLO, Castillo, and Boric’s discourses show how institutional rotation became politicized, framed around legitimacy, sovereignty, and cooperation.
Identity	The Pacific Alliance is framed as part of a broader Latin American project (“our America”), emphasizing unity beyond technical trade cooperation.

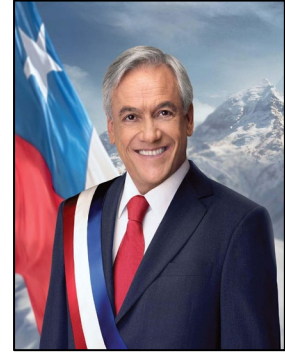
Note. Author’s own elaboration.

Political actors' discourses

The following section presents the profiles of the heads of state, along with the joint and social media statements that were analyzed discursively.

Chile- Sebastian Pinera¹²

According to Encyclopedia Britannica (n.d.), Sebastián Piñera was a Chilean economist, businessman, and politician who served as President of Chile for two non-consecutive terms, from 2010 to 2014 and from 2018 to 2022. Born in Santiago in 1949, he studied economics at the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile and later earned a PhD from Harvard University. Before entering politics, he built a successful business career, notably introducing credit card services to Chile through his company Bancard, and holding significant investments in airlines, television, and other sectors, making him one of the country's wealthiest individuals.



Piñera entered politics as a senator in the early 1990s and later ran for president, winning the 2009 election. His first presidency was marked by the government's response to the devastating 2010 earthquake and tsunami, as well as the dramatic rescue of 33 trapped miners later that year. He focused on economic growth, education reform, and improving public infrastructure. In 2018, he returned to office for a second term, during which he faced significant challenges, including the outbreak of nationwide protests in 2019 over inequality and public services. His administration declared a state of emergency, and his response was both defended and criticized domestically and internationally. He also led Chile through the COVID-19 pandemic, during which the country achieved high vaccination rates early on (Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d.).

Throughout his public life, Piñera was seen as a pragmatic and technocratic leader, often emphasizing stability, modernization, and market-friendly policies. His leadership style was

¹² Note. Photo taken from Sebastián Piñera, by Gobierno de Chile, Encyclopædia Britannica (<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Sebastian-Pinera#/media/1/1250481/185094>). Copyright by Gobierno de Chile. Licensed under Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 (Generic).

polarizing, admired by some for his management skills and criticized by others for his handling of social unrest and issues of inequality. He died in 2024 in a helicopter crash at Lake Ranco. His death prompted national mourning and reflections on a complex legacy spanning business, politics, and public service (Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d.).

Fifth Youth Meeting of the Pacific Alliance

The first transcript analyzed corresponds to the opening address delivered by former President Sebastián Piñera at the Fifth Youth Meeting of the Pacific Alliance, held virtually in 2020. This speech took place in the context of Chile's pro tempore presidency of the Pacific Alliance and amidst the profound disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sebastián Piñera's speech presents Chile as a cooperative and proactive leader within the Pacific Alliance, emphasizing collaboration in regional economic recovery and integration. He states, "*Chile during our pro tempore presidency of the Pacific Alliance has worked intensely with other members... to reactivate our economies, support job recovery, promote investment, and help SMEs*" (Pacific Alliance YouTube channel, 2020). This portrays Chile as a nation contributing constructively to shared goals while aligning with the alliance's collective agenda.

Rather than asserting dominance, Piñera frames Chile's role as one of moral and inclusive leadership, grounded in shared values such as democracy, innovation, and freedom. He declares, "*The countries of the Pacific Alliance are committed to unleashing, unblocking, and not stifling or limiting the force of freedom, creativity, imagination, innovation, entrepreneurship...*" (Pacific Alliance YouTube channel, 2020). This rhetoric draws attention to a regional identity based on common principles.

Youth emerge as the central focus of his address, both as victims of the COVID-19 crisis and as key agents of future development. Piñera acknowledges, "*Young people have been especially affected by the coronavirus pandemic and the global economic recession, which has imposed difficult restrictions on freedoms, meant loss of jobs and opportunities, and limited the ability to undertake and fulfill the goals and dreams of our youth.*" (Pacific Alliance YouTube channel,

2020). He frames collective efforts as a necessary response: *“So that together we can overcome the impacts caused by this pandemic.”* (Pacific Alliance YouTube channel, 2020).

Looking forward, his discourse is marked by optimism and a call to embrace technological transformation: *“We must prepare ourselves to harness [the Fourth Industrial Revolution’s] force to our benefit and not be overtaken by it.”* (Pacific Alliance YouTube channel, 2020). He appeals to a shared vision of progress: *“Together we must continue advancing toward a more inclusive, innovative, and sustainable development and keep building a free, democratic, prosperous region for current and future generations.”* (Pacific Alliance YouTube channel, 2020).

Throughout the speech, Piñera avoids claims of superiority, instead positioning Chile as a facilitator of regional action. His closing sentiment reflects this inclusive ethos: *“We all must be part of this effort because we have a responsibility to create opportunities so our youth can continue educating themselves and growing.”* (Pacific Alliance YouTube channel, 2020). In this way, Piñera integrates national leadership with a collective regional vision, projecting Chile as a responsible actor committed to solidarity, reform, and generational opportunity. Piñera’s 2020 speech reflects a regional focus on crisis management and post-COVID recovery, aimed especially at reassuring younger citizens.

Mexico - Andrés Manuel López Obrador¹³

As described by Encyclopedia Britannica (n.d.), Andrés Manuel López Obrador, commonly known as AMLO, is a Mexican politician who has served as President of Mexico since December 1, 2018. Born on November 13, 1953, in Tepetitán, Tabasco, he studied political science and public administration at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM).



¹³ Note. Photo from The founder of Morena, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, by Micaela Ayala V./Agencia de Noticias ANDES, Encyclopædia Britannica (<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Andres-Manuel-Lopez-Obrador#/media/1/1006424/243674>). Licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 2.0 (Generic).

López Obrador began his political career in the 1970s with the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), later becoming a key figure in the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) and eventually founding his own political movement, MORENA (Movimiento Regeneración Nacional), in 2014. He gained national recognition as Mayor of Mexico City from 2000 to 2005, where he focused on social welfare programs and urban development (Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d.).

After two unsuccessful presidential runs (2006 and 2012), he was elected president in 2018 with a significant majority, running on an anti-corruption, nationalist, and socially progressive platform. His administration has prioritized welfare expansion, state intervention in the economy, energy sovereignty, and a policy of “republican austerity.” He is known for his daily press briefings (mañaneras) and his direct communication style, which has contributed to a highly visible and personalized presidency (Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d.).

Critics argue that his leadership has centralized power and weakened institutional checks, while supporters view him as a reformist breaking with a corrupt political past. His policies on energy, militarization of public security, and democratic institutions have sparked debate nationally and internationally (Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d.). AMLO remains a polarizing but influential figure in Mexican politics, often described as a populist with a strong emphasis on nationalism, social equity, and political transformation. He stated that he would retire from politics entirely after completing his term in 2024 (Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d.).

XV Summit of the Pacific Alliance

The summit took place in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, which had triggered both a severe public health crisis and a sharp economic downturn across the region. The event was held virtually due to health restrictions. AMLO’s intervention focused on sharing Mexico’s approach to addressing the dual crisis, both health and economic, while situating these actions within broader regional cooperation efforts. The summit also addressed regional integration efforts, including the advancement of Singapore and Ecuador as new members (Presidencia de la República de Colombia, 2020).

Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) presents Mexico as pursuing an alternative, morally grounded path in response to crisis, distancing his government from conventional neoliberal

strategies. He emphasizes a bottom-up approach to economic recovery, stating, *“We opted to first rescue the people, the ones in need, to support and reactivate the economy from the bottom up.”* (Presidencia de la República de Colombia, 2020). His speech highlights a rejection of debt, austerity in government spending, and a commitment to social justice: *“We are fighting corruption and promoting a republican austerity policy... no need for debt, no need to raise taxes or energy prices.”* (Presidencia de la República de Colombia, 2020).

Framing the COVID-19 pandemic as an opportunity for transformation, AMLO urges a rethinking of the prevailing economic model: *“We must understand that going to a new normal implies accepting a new reality. We cannot continue with the same strategies. We must reinvent ourselves in all areas.”* He critiques the previous paradigm, arguing, *“It’s very important to rethink how inefficient the neoliberal economic model has been good for minorities, very bad for the people.”* (Presidencia de la República de Colombia, 2020). His narrative centers on Mexico’s distinct pandemic strategy, which avoided foreign loans or tax increases: *“We did not seek loans. We did not raise taxes or fuel prices. We supported the most vulnerable and kept consumption from collapsing.”* (Presidencia de la República de Colombia, 2020). This approach is justified both ethically and practically: *“The fight against corruption means freeing up many funds for development.”* (Presidencia de la República de Colombia, 2020).

AMLO also appeals to regional solidarity and shared values, proclaiming, *“Long live Chile, long live Colombia, long live Peru, and long live our America,”* (Presidencia de la República de Colombia, 2020) and affirming that, *“The government must represent everyone and there must be a clear division between economic power and political power.”* (Presidencia de la República de Colombia, 2020). He supports the expansion of regional cooperation, stating, *“We support the entry of Singapore and, of course, Ecuador into the Alliance.”* (Presidencia de la República de Colombia, 2020).

Throughout, AMLO asserts moral leadership rather than dominance, using references to honesty, justice, and inclusive governance to present Mexico as an ethical example for others: *“Nothing has hurt the country more than the dishonesty of its rulers.”* (Presidencia de la República de Colombia,

2020). His rhetoric combines national self-definition with normative claims, positioning Mexico's path as a model rooted in fairness, sovereignty, and reform.

AMLO's discourse reflects a hybrid of national positioning with a moral and ideological critique of the status quo. He uses the platform not just to report on Mexico's pandemic response, but to advocate for a new socio-economic model rooted in social justice, anti-corruption, and state responsibility aligning his national vision with a call for regional reinvention.

Peru- Pedro Castillo Terrones¹⁴

Pedro Castillo Terrones is a Peruvian educator, union leader, and politician who served as President of Peru from July 28, 2021, until December 7, 2022. Born on October 19, 1969, in the rural district of Chota in Cajamarca, Castillo worked as a primary school teacher and became nationally known after leading a major teachers' strike in 2017. His grassroots activism and outsider status propelled him to the presidency as the candidate of the left-wing party Free Peru, with strong support from rural and lower-income populations (Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d.).



Castillo campaigned on a platform of social justice, increased state involvement in the economy, and constitutional reform, aiming to address longstanding inequality and centralism in Peruvian society. His presidency, however, was marked by political instability, a high turnover of ministers, and constant clashes with Congress. He faced repeated impeachment attempts, reflecting broader institutional tensions and a polarized political climate (Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d.).

On December 7, 2022, facing imminent impeachment, Castillo attempted to dissolve Congress and establish an emergency government: a move widely condemned as unconstitutional. He was immediately removed from office, arrested, and later charged with rebellion, conspiracy, and corruption. His ouster sparked nationwide protests, particularly in rural regions, resulting in dozens

¹⁴ Note. Photo from Pedro Castillo, Encyclopædia Britannica (<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Pedro-Castillo#/media/1/2196678/275327>). Copyright by Encyclopædia Britannica.

of deaths and renewed debates over democracy, legitimacy, and representation in Peru (Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d.).

Pedro Castillo's brief presidency highlighted the deep social and political divides in the country. While critics view his administration as legally and administratively flawed, many supporters consider his removal a reflection of elite resistance to structural change and popular representation. His case remains emblematic of the broader crisis of governance in contemporary Peru (Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d.).

Pro-tempore presidency 2022

The transcript and video excerpts (France 24 Espanol, 2023) relate to the political conflict between Mexico and Peru at the end of 2022 regarding the rotating pro tempore presidency of the Pacific Alliance. By tradition, Mexico was to hand over leadership to Peru. However, Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) refused to recognize Dina Boluarte, who became president of Peru following the removal of Pedro Castillo amid Peru's political crisis.

AMLO labeled Boluarte's government as illegitimate, asserting that Castillo's ousting was undemocratic. This led to a diplomatic standoff, delaying the Pacific Alliance's institutional functions. After months of tension, a diplomatic solution was brokered: Chile would temporarily assume the *pro tempore* presidency, allowing the alliance to move forward.

In a politically charged episode surrounding leadership of the Pacific Alliance, Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) and former Peruvian President Pedro Castillo both deployed discourses rooted in democratic legitimacy to assert moral and political positions on regional governance.

AMLO refused to hand over the rotating presidency of the Pacific Alliance to Dina Boluarte's government, questioning its legitimacy after the ousting of Castillo. He declared, "*I cannot hand over anything because she is not, for us, legally and legitimately the president of Peru.*" (France 24 Espanol, 2023). This statement framed Mexico's stance not as a breach of protocol, but as a principled stand against what AMLO viewed as an illegitimate seizure of power. His rhetoric

emphasized legality, constitutional order, and regional values over diplomatic formalities, positioning Mexico as a guardian of democratic legitimacy within the alliance.

AMLO's discourse disrupted procedural norms, as he used the Pacific Alliance platform to assert a moral vision rather than focus on technical cooperation or integration. While combative toward the Peruvian government, his statements also signaled solidarity with the Peruvian people and democratic forces. He portrayed the situation as a constitutional crisis requiring extraordinary diplomatic measures and implicitly called on the alliance to align itself with democratic values rather than institutional convenience.

From his side, Pedro Castillo, communicating via social media after his removal, framed the controversy as part of a broader struggle between democratic will and political obstruction. Thanking AMLO, he stated, *"I thank the solidarity and support of the brother president of Mexico... for placing the common interest of our peoples above any political irresponsibility that a certain sector caused by preventing my trip."* (France 24 Espanol, 2023). Castillo asserted his continued legitimacy and right to represent Peru, emphasizing that *"Peru is ready to receive the presidents of the Alliance."* (France 24 Espanol, 2023).

Castillo's remarks combined gratitude, defiance, and a claim to national and regional leadership. He framed the inability to assume the Pacific Alliance presidency as an affront to Peru's obligations and to regional integration itself. His discourse aligned personal legitimacy with collective regional interests, invoking *"the common interest of our peoples"* (France 24 Espanol, 2023) and emphasizing shared responsibility.

Together, the statements by AMLO and Castillo reflect how regional forums can become sites of contested legitimacy, where discourse serves not just to describe events but to reshape the principles underlying diplomatic and institutional action. Their rhetoric highlights a tension between procedural continuity and moral-political claims to democratic authority in Latin America.

Chile- Gabriel Boric¹⁵

According to Encyclopedia Britannica (n.d.), Gabriel Boric Font is a Chilean politician, activist, and the current President of Chile, having assumed office on March 11, 2022. Born on February 11, 1986, in Punta Arenas, he emerged from Chile's student movement, gaining national attention as a leader during the 2011 university protests and later serving as president of the University of Chile Student Federation.



Boric entered Congress in 2014 as an independent representative for the Magallanes region and became a key figure in the formation of the left-leaning Broad Front (Frente Amplio) coalition. He co-founded the political party Social Convergence and built his presidential campaign around themes of social justice, environmental sustainability, gender equality, and a commitment to democratic reform (Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d.).

In 2021, Boric won the presidency in a runoff against conservative candidate José Antonio Kast, becoming Chile's youngest president at age 36. His administration has pursued progressive reforms, including raising the minimum wage, expanding social programs, and proposing a new constitution to replace the one inherited from the Pinochet era. The first draft of the new constitution was rejected by referendum in 2022, marking a setback for his constitutional agenda (Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d.).

Boric has faced governance challenges, including rising crime, economic uncertainty, cabinet instability, and declining approval ratings. Despite this, his presidency represents a generational and ideological shift in Chilean politics, reflecting broader efforts to redefine the Latin American left. Internationally, he has positioned Chile as a proponent of human rights and democratic values, often speaking out against authoritarian regimes regardless of ideology. His leadership style combines institutional pragmatism with activist roots, and his tenure continues to shape debates over the future of Chile's political, economic, and social model (Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d.).

¹⁵ Note. Photo from Retrato Oficial Presidente Boric Font, by Gobierno de Chile, Wikimedia Commons (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Retrato_Oficial_Presidente_Boric_Font.jpg). Licensed under Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Chile.

Pro-tempore presidency 2022

In the Pro-tempore presidency 2022 context, Chilean President Gabriel Boric stepped in to mediate. After hosting Pedro Castillo in Santiago, Boric announced Chile's proposal to relocate the suspended summit to Peru and later agreed for Chile to assume the pro tempore presidency temporarily (AFP Espanol, 2022). Boric's remarks emphasized diplomacy, dialogue, and the need to preserve the alliance's unity and functionality despite political tensions.

His intervention marked Chile's role as a pragmatic facilitator, seeking to de-escalate the conflict and restore the normal functioning of the Pacific Alliance.

Chilean President Gabriel Boric presents Chile as a neutral, pragmatic actor in the Pacific Alliance crisis, positioning his country as a bridge-builder committed to regional cooperation. He announced, "*We have agreed with President Castillo to hold the suspended Pacific Alliance summit in Peru, at a date we will announce soon, after consultations with the other member countries*" (Pacific Alliance summit, 2022), signaling Chile's role in breaking the deadlock without inflaming political tensions.

Boric's discourse frames this diplomatic intervention within a broader vision of Latin American integration, emphasizing shared values and constructive interaction: "*The agreement reflects the political will to continue betting on Latin American integration that favors dialogue, economic and commercial exchange, cooperation, and international insertion.*" (Pacific Alliance summit, 2022). His rhetoric downplays political confrontation in favor of institutional continuity and mutual respect among member states.

Chile's assumption of provisional leadership and proposal of a new summit location are presented as necessary steps to preserve the alliance's function. Boric avoids asserting dominance, instead emphasizing dialogue and consensus, portraying Chile as a facilitator working to "*protect regional cooperation mechanisms*" and "*ensure that all voices are respected.*" (Pacific Alliance summit, 2022).

In contrast to more polarizing narratives during the crisis, Boric's language is measured and inclusive, stressing shared identity and the need for practical solutions. His approach highlights

diplomatic leadership rooted in unity, institutional stability, and a collective vision for the region's future.

Excerpt from a Social Media Post

"I thank the solidarity and support of the brother president of Mexico, @lopezobrador_, for placing the common interest of our peoples above any political irresponsibility caused by a certain sector that prevented my trip to his generous country."



Source: Pedro Castillo Terrones (PedroCastilloTe), social media post on X, as cited in Aristeguinoticias, 2022.

Pedro Castillo's tweet reflects a carefully constructed discourse of regional solidarity, political victimization, and moral legitimacy. He writes, *"I thank the solidarity and support of the brother president of Mexico, @lopezobrador_, for placing the common interest of our peoples above any political irresponsibility caused by a certain sector that prevented my trip to his generous country."*

Through this message, Castillo frames himself as a victim of internal obstruction, attributing his blocked international involvement to political actors at home rather than personal failure.

He positions Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador as a "fraternal ally" (*hermano presidente*), who prioritizes shared regional interests over domestic political disputes. The phrase *"to place the common interests of our peoples above any political irresponsibility."* emphasizes a contrast between regional cooperation and internal division, aligning Castillo with broader Latin American unity and portraying his opponents as undermining both national and international responsibilities.

The tweet implicitly asserts Castillo's role as a legitimate representative of Peru and a committed regionalist leader. By highlighting *"solidarity and support"* from a respected regional figure,

Castillo strengthens his claim to rightful leadership and casts internal opposition as shortsighted and damaging to regional integration.

All in all, the message combines symbolism, kinship language, and diplomatic alignment to construct a narrative of unjust political exclusion, while affirming Castillo's alignment with pan-Latin American values and cooperation. It reinforces his image as a leader devoted to the common good, unjustly impeded by domestic political forces.

Colombia-Gustavo Petro¹⁶

As stated in Encyclopedia Britannica (n.d.), Gustavo Francisco Petro Urrego is a Colombian politician, economist, and the current President of Colombia, having assumed office on August 7, 2022. Born on April 19, 1960, Petro rose to prominence as a member of the demobilized M-19 guerrilla movement before transitioning to institutional politics. He later served as a congressman, senator, and Mayor of Bogotá (2012-2015), where he promoted social and environmental reforms amid controversy and governance challenges.



In 2022, Petro was elected president as the candidate of the Historic Pact, becoming Colombia's first left-wing president in modern history. His campaign and presidency have focused on reducing inequality, transitioning away from fossil fuels, advancing agrarian reform, and promoting peacebuilding. He has advocated for a more inclusive state, fiscal reform, and a rethinking of Colombia's approach to drug policy (Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d.).

Petro has positioned Colombia as a regional leader in climate action and social justice, often linking environmental sustainability with structural economic change. Internationally, he has emphasized multilateralism, human rights, and regional integration, while calling for democratic accountability in neighbouring countries (Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d.).

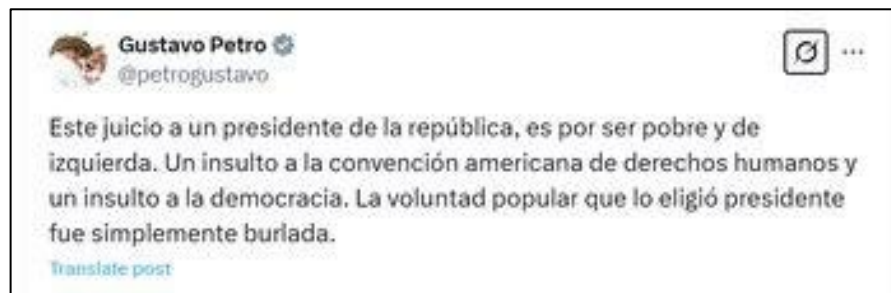
¹⁶ Note. Photo from Gustavo Petro, by Jaime Saldarriaga—Reuters/Alamy, Encyclopædia Britannica (<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Gustavo-Petro#/media/1/1968867/268080>). Copyright by Reuters/Alamy.

His administration has achieved progress on issues such as pension reform and expanded environmental diplomacy, but has faced strong legislative resistance, internal political tensions, and declining approval ratings. As a result, some of his broader reform agenda remains stalled or under negotiation (Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d.).

Petro's presidency marks a significant ideological shift in Colombia, reflecting broader regional currents in Latin America. His leadership style brings together activist rhetoric with institutional participation, and his legacy is still unfolding amid debates over democratic reform, economic transition, and state capacity (Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d.).

Excerpt from a Social Media Post

“This trial of a president of the republic (Peru) is because he is poor and leftist. An insult to the American Convention on Human Rights and an insult to democracy. The popular will that elected him president was simply mocked.”



Source: Gustavo Petro, social media post on X, dated March 2025.

In a strongly worded tweet, Colombian President Gustavo Petro frames the trial of a fellow leftist leader, widely interpreted as a reference to Peru's Pedro Castillo, as an attack on democracy, human rights, and popular sovereignty. He condemns the proceedings as unjust and ideologically motivated, declaring, *“for being poor and leftist”*, thus portraying the accused as a victim of class and political bias.

Petro elevates the trial to a symbolic struggle, asserting it violates fundamental democratic norms: *“An insult to the American Convention on Human Rights and an insult to democracy”*. He further claims, *“The popular will... was simply mocked”*, arguing that electoral legitimacy has been disregarded.

Through this discourse, Petro positions himself as a regional defender of democracy and human rights, aligning with marginalized groups and electorally empowered populations whose choices he believes are being overturned through legal and institutional manipulation. His message blends legal principles with moral indignation, appealing to international law while invoking solidarity with the poor and the political left.

In conclusion, the statement reflects a discourse of resistance and regional solidarity, where Petro casts himself not only as Colombia's president but as a broader advocate for democratic values in Latin America. Petro reaffirms his identity as part of a progressive bloc defending electoral legitimacy against what he portrays as politically motivated persecution.

Visegrad Group

The first set of V4 discourses under analysis comprises the interactions of Prime Ministers Mateusz Morawiecki, Viktor Orbán, Andrej Babiš, and Eduard Heger between 2019 and 2023. Together, these speeches and statements reveal the origins and founding principles of their narratives, rooted in sovereignty, regional solidarity, and the defense of national interests within the European framework. They also reflect clear regional cooperation objectives, emphasizing security, economic recovery, and collective action in response to crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine.

Several of these public discourses stand as key milestones and events, including Morawiecki's unifying rhetoric during Poland's 2021 V4 presidency, Orbán's assertion of sovereignty and selective solidarity during Hungary's leadership, Babiš's pragmatic focus on competitiveness and EU cooperation, and Heger's conciliatory appeals for unity and transatlantic cooperation. At the same time, these discourses illustrate an ongoing process of institutional evolution, where divergent political priorities test the cohesion of the Visegrad Group. Finally, their resonance underlines the impact and legacy of leadership discourse in shaping the V4's image as both a partner and a challenger within the European Union. Figure 15 presents an overview of the most pronounced themes in these discourses, highlighting the broader context of solidarity, sovereignty, and strategic cooperation within the Visegrad Group.

Identity	Invoked in Orbán’s and Morawiecki’s speeches to emphasize Central European unity and cultural distinctiveness.
Resilience	Tied to post-pandemic recovery, economic strength, and energy independence.
Leadership	Reflected in national roles within the V4 presidencies, particularly Poland’s and Hungary’s attempts to shape direction.
Democracy	Referred to as both a shared value (e.g., support for Belarus opposition) and a contested concept within EU relations.

Note. Author’s own elaboration.

The following section presents the profiles of the Visegrad Group heads of state, along with the joint and social media statements that were analyzed discursively.

Poland- former Prime Minister Mateusz Jakub Morawiecki¹⁷

Encyclopedia Britannica (n.d.) describes Mateusz Morawiecki as a Polish politician, economist, and former banker who served as Prime Minister of Poland from 2017 to 2023. A member of the Law and Justice party (PiS), Morawiecki played a central role in shaping Poland’s domestic and international policy during a period marked by economic growth, political polarization, and tensions with the European Union.



Morawiecki holds degrees in history and business administration, including an MBA from the Wrocław University of Economics and advanced studies at universities in Hamburg and Basel. Before entering politics, he worked in banking and finance, most notably as chairman of Bank Zachodni WBK, one of Poland’s largest banks (Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d.).

He joined the government in 2015 as Minister of Development, and later served as Minister of Finance, before being appointed Prime Minister in December 2017, succeeding Beata Szydło. His

¹⁷ Note. Photo from Mateusz Morawiecki, by Ministry of Economic Development, Warsaw, Encyclopædia Britannica (<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Mateusz-Morawiecki#/media/1/2113608/230353>). Copyright by Ministry of Economic Development, Warsaw.

premiership focused on combining economic modernization with social conservatism, maintaining robust welfare programs like “500+” child benefits while promoting digitalization and industrial policy under the slogan of a “responsible development plan” (Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d.).

On the international stage, Morawiecki was a vocal advocate of national sovereignty within the EU and pushed back against EU criticism over Poland’s judicial reforms, which the European Commission argued undermined judicial independence. He supported tighter migration controls and positioned Poland as a key NATO member and regional security actor, especially after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 (Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d.).

Domestically, his government was known for centralizing power, confronting independent media and judiciary institutions, and promoting a nationalist narrative aligned with traditional Catholic values. While praised for overseeing strong economic performance and a firm response to regional security challenges, he also faced criticism for eroding democratic norms and rule of law (Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d.).

In the 2023 parliamentary elections, the Law and Justice party lost its majority, leading to the formation of a new coalition government. Morawiecki formally stepped down as Prime Minister in December 2023 (Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d.).

The V4 Summit in Katowice 2021

According to Government of Poland, (2021), the V4 Summit in Katowice (June 2021) marked the formal end of Poland’s presidency of the Visegrad Group and the handover to Hungary. Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki used this moment to reflect on the Polish presidency’s achievements and set the tone for future cooperation within the group.

Poland’s presidency unfolded amid major challenges, including the COVID-19 health and economic crisis, escalating tensions with Russia, EU debates on migration, asylum and Schengen reforms and the future of Europe, and continued efforts to back democratic movements in Belarus while advancing Western Balkans integration.

In his speech marking Poland’s presidency of the Visegrad Group (V4), Mateusz Morawiecki framed Poland as a unifying and proactive force in Central Europe and the European Union. He

emphasized themes of solidarity, collective action, and regional influence, stating, *“The Polish Presidency has shown its unifying power. We are playing as a team and can achieve more together.”* (Morawiecki, 2021). This rhetorical emphasis on teamwork and cohesion positions Poland as both a leader and facilitator within the V4.

Morawiecki presented the V4 as a coherent bloc working toward resilience and recovery in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic: *“One of the main objectives was to make sure that the Reconstruction Fund is large, significant and flexible, helping different sectors of the economy to recover from the pandemic as quickly as possible.”* (Morawiecki, 2021). His discourse linked these regional actions to broader European priorities, asserting, *“In the EU, everyone counts with our opinion as a partner.”* (Morawiecki, 2021).

Morawiecki (2021) also highlighted the V4’s response to external geopolitical challenges, particularly those posed by Russia, and its support for democratic change in neighboring regions: *“We showed solidarity in the face of the challenges arising from the Russian Federation’s aggressive policy,”* and *“We developed the EU-approved Plan for Belarus in Lublin.”* Morawiecki stated how joint V4 efforts led to tangible outcomes, such as securing major EU funding: *“Joint combating efforts within the V4 helped to obtain unprecedentedly high amounts of funds for the entire Visegrad Group”* (Morawiecki, 2021).

His speech consistently invoked shared identity and mutual support, reinforcing the V4 as a values-based alliance: *“We adopted a declaration of solidarity with the Czech Republic,”* and *“We were active in supporting the democratic opposition in Belarus.”* (Morawiecki, 2021). These statements reflect a strategic use of solidarity rhetoric to affirm the group’s democratic commitments.

Finally, Morawiecki positioned the V4 as a recognized actor in EU decision-making, stating, *“The ministers of foreign affairs unanimously raised the issue of EU accession of the Western Balkans countries and stressed its importance for the success of the entire European integration project.”* (Morawiecki, 2021).

Morawiecki’s discourse reflects a leadership style grounded in collective agency, solidarity, and strategic influence. His speech constructs Poland not only as a regional leader within the V4 but

also as a credible and engaged partner in shaping EU policies particularly on recovery, enlargement, and security through cooperation and shared democratic values.

Hungary- Viktor Orban¹⁸

As noted in Encyclopedia Britannica (n.d.), Viktor Mihály Orbán (born May 31, 1963) is a Hungarian politician who has served as Prime Minister of Hungary since 2010, and previously from 1998 to 2002. A dominant figure in post-communist Central European politics, Orbán is the leader of the national-conservative Fidesz party, which he helped transform from a liberal youth movement in the 1980s into Hungary's most powerful political force.



Orbán studied law at Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest and later completed a fellowship at the University of Oxford. He gained national prominence in 1989 with a widely televised speech demanding the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Hungary. In 1998, at age 35, he became one of Europe's youngest prime ministers (Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d.).

After losing the 2002 and 2006 elections, Orbán returned to power in 2010 with a supermajority, allowing his government to implement sweeping constitutional, institutional, and legal reforms. His administration has been characterized by a centralization of power, assertive nationalism, and an "illiberal democracy" model that emphasizes national sovereignty, traditional values, and cultural identity over liberal pluralism (Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d.).

Domestically, Orbán has prioritized economic nationalism, including taxing multinational corporations, restricting foreign influence, and promoting Hungarian ownership in key sectors. He has implemented generous family subsidies, tightened immigration policy, and positioned Hungary as a defender of "Christian Europe" (Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d.).

¹⁸ Note. Photo from Viktor Orbán, by Paulo Filgueiras/UN Photo, Encyclopædia Britannica (<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Viktor-Orban#/media/1/1103850/247888>). Copyright by UN Photo.

Internationally, Orbán is a vocal critic of the European Union's migration and integration policies. While Hungary remains an EU member, his government frequently clashes with Brussels over rule-of-law issues, media freedom, judicial independence, and anti-corruption standards. Orbán maintains close ties with conservative leaders globally, and has sought to build alternative alliances, including with China and Russia (Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d.).

The V4 Summit in Katowice 2021

In his 2021 speech at the V4 summit in Katowice, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán presented a confident and strategic vision for the Visegrad Four under Hungary's incoming presidency. Delivered at a time of post-pandemic uncertainty and shifting global dynamics, Orbán's remarks emphasized regional cohesion, sovereignty, and the V4's growing economic and political clout.

He framed Hungary's role as a facilitator of collective strength, stating, *"Our presidency is aware that the strength of any team is only as good as the quality of its players... we only do organizational work."* (Orban, 2021). In doing so, Orbán positioned the V4 not as a loose coalition but as a regional coalition with global relevance: *"If we look at the four countries as one entity, we are the seventeenth largest economy in the world which would put us in the G20."* (Orban, 2021).

Orbán outlined a vision of winning through change, describing the Hungarian presidency's goal as ensuring that the V4 emerges as a beneficiary of global economic shifts: *"The Hungarian presidency will work to ensure that in this altered situation we V4 countries are among those which win from global economic change."* (Orban, 2021). He linked this to broader ambitions, including "intellectual recharging" as part of Europe's post-pandemic recovery.

Reflecting on the COVID-19 response, Orbán highlighted the V4's solidarity in crisis, noting, *"We worked together to bring home our citizens who were stranded abroad, to coordinate the distribution of supplies, to send doctors to one another... to provide vaccine assistance."* (Orban, 2021). He justified skepticism toward certain EU-wide measures such as tax harmonization and compulsory migrant distribution as part of protecting national and regional resilience:

“We do not support international initiatives that would lead to tax increases. We do not favour compulsory distribution in any form; migration poses a particularly high risk in the current health situation.” (Orbán, 2021).

Orbán’s discourse also appealed to shared values of industriousness and unity, declaring, *“We have countries that are extremely industrious, ambitious and keen to work.”* and *“Not one of the four has been left to face its difficulties alone.” (Orban, 2021).*

Finally, he asserted the V4’s role in shaping the EU’s direction, saying, *“We have agreed to actively participate in the debate on the future of the European Union, both individually and collectively.”* and emphasized the bloc’s advocacy for enlargement: *“The challenges facing the Union cannot be addressed without the integration of the Western Balkans.” (Orban, 2021).*

Orbán’s speech constructed a narrative of the V4 as a resilient, ambitious, and strategically important regional project. His rhetoric fused practical goals, economic recovery and security with assertive regional identity and EU association. Under Hungarian leadership, the V4 was portrayed as not just defending its interests but actively contributing to Europe's future.

Czechia-Andrej Babiš¹⁹

According to Government of the Czech Republic (n.d.), Andrej Babiš is a Czech businessman and politician who served as Prime Minister of the Czech Republic from 2017 to 2021. Born on September 2, 1954, in Bratislava, he built a prominent business career before entering politics, founding the Agrofert conglomerate, one of the largest companies in Central Europe, with interests in agriculture, food, chemicals, and media.



Babiš entered politics in 2011 by establishing the centrist-populist ANO 2011 movement, campaigning on a platform of anti-corruption, state efficiency, and technocratic governance. He served as Finance Minister and Deputy Prime Minister before leading ANO to

¹⁹ Note. Photo from Andrej Babiš in February 2025, by Vox España (<https://www.flickr.com/photos/voxespana/54314449206/>). Licensed under Creative Commons.

victory in the 2017 parliamentary elections. His premiership focused on fiscal pragmatism, economic growth, welfare expansion, and strong crisis management during events such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Czech Republic, n.d.).

While widely regarded as a pragmatic leader with a pro-business orientation, Babiš's time in office was marked by controversy. He faced long-standing allegations of conflict of interest due to his continued control over Agrofert through trust funds, as well as EU subsidy fraud charges. His tenure also drew criticism for weakening institutional checks, concentrating media ownership, and blurring the lines between business and politics (Czech Republic, n.d.).

Despite these controversies, Babiš maintained significant popular support through targeted social policies and a strong media presence. After narrowly losing the 2021 election and a 2023 presidential bid, he remains a leading figure in Czech politics, positioning himself for a potential return to power (Czech Republic, n.d.).

Andrej Babiš is a polarizing figure in Czech public life praised for managerial competence and economic stewardship but criticized for eroding democratic norms and maintaining close ties between business and political power. His career reflects broader tensions in Central Europe between technocratic governance, populist politics, and institutional integrity (Czech Republic, n.d.).

The V4 2020 Press Conference

The 2020 press conference followed a high-level meeting between the prime ministers of the Visegrad Four (V4): the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, and Hungary and the Chancellor of Austria, held in Prague. This was Chancellor Kurz's first foreign visit following the formation of Austria's new government, underlining Austria's strong regional ties with Central Europe (ČTK Connect, 2020).

The meeting focused on key EU priorities, including migration and border protection, the EU budget and cohesion funding, climate neutrality and the energy transition, economic competitiveness and industrial policy, and enlargement, particularly for the Western Balkans. The event emphasized both the common priorities of the V4-Austria partnership and the divergent

views, especially around energy policy (e.g. nuclear power) and budget contributions (ČTK Connect, 2020).

Andrej Babiš (Czech Republic) positioned both Czechia and the V4 as constructive but critical voices within the EU, emphasizing a hands-on, solution-oriented approach: *“The weight of the new Council should be even greater than before... we want to help solving the different problems and issues of the EU.”* He also focused on regional cohesion, stating, *“We have many in common... together in Europe we can do a lot.”*

Sebastian Kurz (Austria) framed Austria as a bridge between East and West, calling for stronger cohesion across the continent: *“There are some gaps between Western and Eastern Europe we want to fight that.”* He also promoted a renewables-focused climate strategy, adding, *“Funds should be allocated to the development of renewable energy sources, not to nuclear energy.”*

Viktor Orbán (Hungary) emphasized the V4’s openness to broader partnerships, notably with Austria, saying: *“V4 emphasizes that it doesn't want to be a closed club; Austria is a natural partner.”*

In terms of vision, the leaders aligned around the idea of a competitive and secure Europe, with Mateusz Morawiecki (Poland) stating, *“We need to increase the competitiveness of Europe... economic growth determines the quality of life of our citizens.”* However, they stressed that climate goals must be achieved equitably: *“Some of us need more means to achieve the objective,”* Morawiecki argued, while Peter Pellegrini (Slovakia) added, *“It must be a socially just transformation; it cannot deteriorate the social situation in the regions.”*

On crisis management, particularly migration, Kurz declared a hardline stance: *“We must protect the external borders. We must stop illegal migration.”*

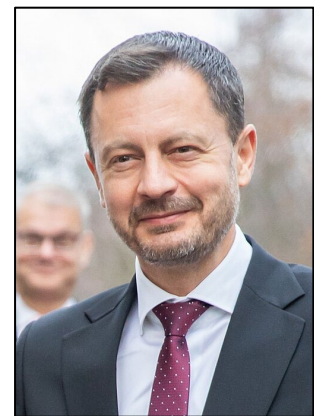
Regarding power and representation, the leaders asserted a preference for consensus-driven decision-making in EU policy. Babiš insisted, *“There is no over-voting possible on migration; decisions must be based on consensus.”* Kurz reinforced Austria’s energy stance with, *“We hope*

that the Just Transition Fund will not be used for the support of nuclear energy because it would not be the right decision in our opinion.”

The discourse reflects a shared commitment among the V4 and Austria to economic competitiveness, national sovereignty, and regional cooperation, paired with a clear rejection of top-down EU mandates. Leaders emphasized solidarity, differentiated paths to climate neutrality, and the defense of national interests, especially in areas like migration and energy policy. While united in their regional focus, they also revealed differing visions particularly on energy underscoring both the cohesion and diversity within Central Europe’s political configurations.

Slovakia- Eduard Heger²⁰

Grokipedia Editors (n.d.) reports Eduard Heger (born May 3, 1976, in Bratislava) as a Slovak economist and politician who served as Prime Minister of Slovakia from April 2021 to May 2023. He holds a degree in economics from the University of Economics in Bratislava and worked in the private sector in management and consulting before entering politics.



Heger began his political career with the OĽaNO (Ordinary People and Independent Personalities) movement, entering Parliament in 2016. He later served as Minister of Finance and Deputy Prime Minister under Prime Minister Igor Matovič during the COVID-19 pandemic. In April 2021, following internal coalition tensions, Heger replaced Matovič as Prime Minister, offering a more moderate and diplomatic leadership style aimed at stabilizing the government (Grokipedia Editors, n.d.).

As Prime Minister, Heger played a key role in Slovakia’s pandemic response, economic recovery, and participation with European institutions. He was a strong supporter of Ukraine during the 2022 Russian invasion, actively promoting EU solidarity and military aid. His government was marked

²⁰ Note. Photo from Prime Minister of Slovakia Eduard Heger met in Helsinki, by Lauri Heikkinen – Finnish Government (<https://www.flickr.com/photos/finnishgovernment/52490182274/in/photostream/>). Licensed under Creative Commons.*

by pro-European policies and efforts to strengthen Slovakia’s role in regional and EU affairs (Grokikipedia Editors, n.d.).

Despite his moderate appeal, Heger’s administration faced persistent political instability. A no-confidence vote in December 2022 led to the collapse of his government, after which he served in a caretaker capacity until May 2023. In early 2023, he left OĽaNO and launched a new centrist political party, Democrats, positioning himself as a pro-reform, pro-European leader ahead of early elections (Grokikipedia Editors, n.d.).

Eduard Heger is known for his pragmatic, pro-European leadership and efforts to bring stability to Slovak politics during a turbulent period. His tenure was shaped by crisis management, transatlantic alignment, and coalition challenges. As leader of the Democrats, he continues to advocate for centrist reform and European integration in Slovak political life (Grokikipedia Editors, n.d.).

Excerpts from Social Media Posts

Slovakia

“1st summit of @V4_PRES after RU aggression against UA to #reflect about the role of the V4. We should focus on #regional coop & common interest. Discussed protection of Schengen borders, high energy prices. Agreed on UA territorial integrity & sovereignty, FI & SE entry into NATO”



Source: Heger, E. [@eduardheger], social media post on X, dated November, 2022.

Eduard Heger's discourse during Slovakia's V4 presidency presents a pragmatic and consensus-seeking vision, positioning both himself and Slovakia as facilitators of constructive regional dialogue in a changing security environment. Framing the summit as a moment for reassessment, Heger called on leaders "*to #reflect about the role of the V4,*" signaling an awareness of internal divergences and external pressures following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

He emphasizes that the V4 remains relevant but must redefine its purpose based on shared interests and regional cooperation: "*We should focus on #regional coop & common interest.*" His discourse emphasizes practical priorities: Schengen border protection, high energy prices, and security as areas where the V4 can still find unity: "*Discussed protection of Schengen borders, high energy prices.*"

Heger aligns the V4 firmly with European and NATO priorities, affirming support for Ukraine's sovereignty and the accession of Finland and Sweden to NATO: "*Agreed on UA territorial integrity & sovereignty, FI & SE entry into NATO.*" This positions the V4 not as an alternative to European institutions, but as an actor committed to their core values and missions.

Throughout his messaging, Heger downplays internal rifts and projects solidarity, moderation, and cooperation, using symbolic language and images, joint appearances, roundtable discussions, national and EU flags to reinforce unity. His leadership style promotes a diplomatic, bridging role, distinguishing Slovakia as a stabilizing presence within the V4.

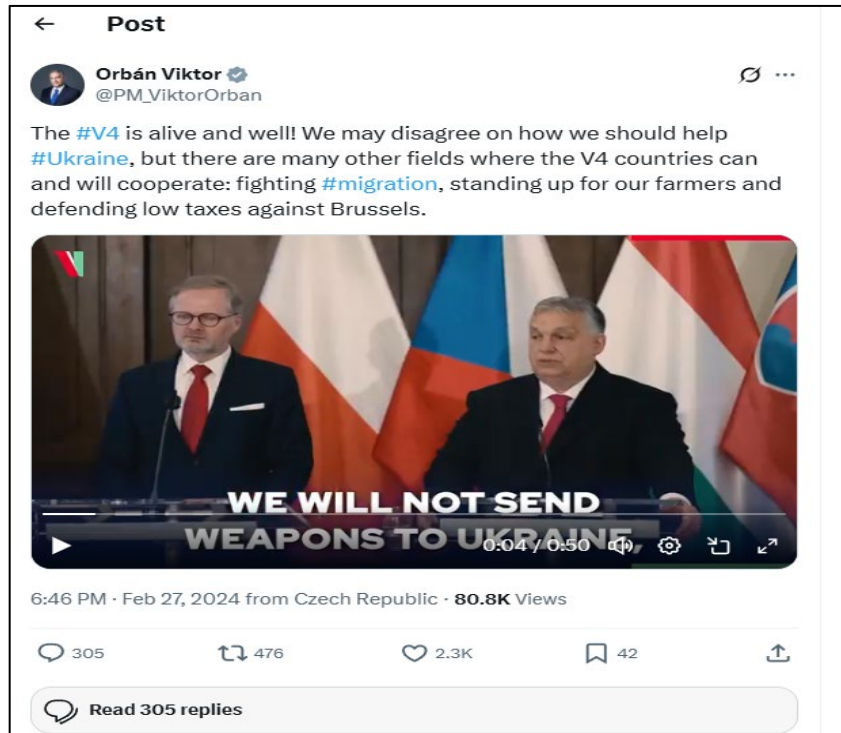
Eduard Heger's discourse at the V4 summit reflects a calm, strategic leadership approach, focusing on consensus around regional security, energy, and NATO cooperation. His message seeks to reassure audiences that despite political differences, the V4 can remain a cooperative and relevant bloc aligned with European values and transatlantic priorities.

Hungary

“The #V4 is alive and well! We may disagree on how we should help #Ukraine, but there are many other fields where the V4 countries can and will cooperate: fighting #migration, standing up for our farmers and defending low taxes against Brussels.”

Source: Orbán, V.

[@PM_ViktorOrban], social media post on X, dated February, 2024.



Viktor Orbán’s discourse strategically reasserts Hungary’s leadership within the V4, using a combination of nationalist messaging and selective regional solidarity to both defend Hungary’s distinct position especially on Ukraine and to maintain the perception of V4 unity.

He presents himself as a guardian of sovereignty, focused on national priorities such as low taxes, protecting farmers, and resisting migration: *“fighting #migration, standing up for our farmers...”* He casts Hungary’s policies as principled and consistent, especially in contrast to EU expectations, emphasizing that *“The #V4 is alive and well!”* despite internal disagreements.

Acknowledging divisions over Ukraine, Orbán downplays them by highlighting consensus on other topics: *“We may disagree on how we should help #Ukraine...”* The accompanying caption *“We will not send weapons to Ukraine”* reinforces Hungary’s isolationist stance while reinforcing its sovereign decision-making. In doing so, Orbán both asserts independence and seeks legitimacy through selective alignment with V4 partners.

Orbán positions the V4 as a platform for shared resistance against Brussels, with emphasis on sovereignty, economic nationalism, and migration control. He appeals to a common regional identity rooted in defending national interests rather than full EU conformity.

Visually, the use of national flags and joint appearances aims to project solidarity, while his language reveals an intent to reshape the V4's relevance around Hungary's policy agenda.

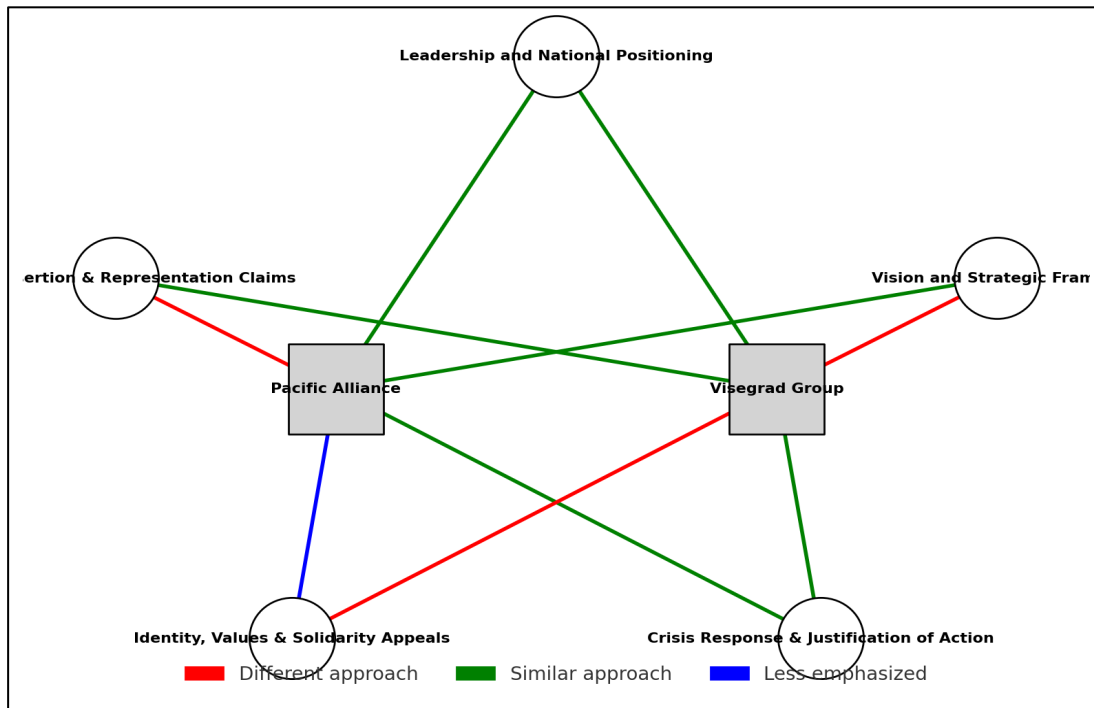
Prime Minister Orbán's discourse is a carefully calibrated attempt to preserve V4 unity on Hungarian terms. By spotlighting common ground on migration, agriculture, and tax policy while sidestepping conflict over Ukraine he reframes the V4 as a useful, though selective, alliance. His message seeks to reassure domestic audiences and signal Hungary's continued regional influence, all while affirming an independent course within the EU.

5.4.1 Political leaders dimension Comparison

Figure 16 highlights the main convergences and divergences in the political leadership discourses of the Pacific Alliance and the Visegrad Group. Both regional organizations demonstrate a similar emphasis on leadership and national positioning, framing their roles within regional and international contexts through narratives of responsibility and influence. Likewise, crisis response and justification of action emerge as a shared priority, reflecting their leaders' focus on pandemic management, resilience, and collective recovery.

However, clear contrasts appear in other dimensions: the Pacific Alliance places stronger emphasis on identity, values, and solidarity appeals, often invoking ideals of democracy, inclusion, and social justice, whereas the Visegrad Group tends to frame its discourse around sovereignty and conservative values. Similarly, power assertion and representation claims are more prominent among Visegrad leaders, who stress national sovereignty and defiance of supranational constraints, while strategic vision and framing within the Pacific Alliance deepen regional cooperation and economic modernization.

Figure 16. PA and V4 Political Leaders Categories.



Note: Visualization generated with Discourse Network Analyzer (DNA) Software

This comparison reveals how regional blocs express divergent political cultures and strategic aims through leader discourse: the Pacific Alliance promotes a values-based, progressive model, while the V4 emphasizes national sovereignty, resilience, and influence within and beyond the EU, as table 14 shows:

Table 14. PA and V4 leaders' discourses comparison.

Category	Pacific Alliance	Visegrad Group
Leadership and National Positioning	Leaders such as Sebastián Piñera, AMLO, Gabriel Boric, and Pedro Castillo position their countries as collaborative and value-driven actors within the alliance. Leadership is expressed in terms of solidarity, moral legitimacy, and	V4 leaders, particularly Viktor Orbán, Mateusz Morawiecki, and Andrej Babiš, adopt a more assertive and strategic leadership tone, emphasizing national sovereignty, EU skepticism, and pragmatic influence:

	<p>regional responsibility, rather than dominance:</p> <p>Piñera: “We all must be part of this effort... to create opportunities for our youth.”</p> <p>AMLO: “We opted to first rescue the people, the ones in need.”</p> <p>Castillo: Framed himself as a “legitimate representative” unjustly blocked from regional leadership. PA leadership discourse favours moral authority and inclusion.</p> <p>Leadership tone: Inclusive, moral, reformist</p>	<p>Orbán: “The #V4 is alive and well!”</p> <p>Morawiecki: “We are playing as a team and can achieve more together.”</p> <p>Babiš: “We want to help solving the different problems and issues of the EU.”</p> <p>V4 leadership emphasizes regional influence, national interest, and strategic autonomy.</p> <p>Leadership tone: Assertive, pragmatic, strategic</p>
<p>Vision and Strategic Framing</p>	<p>Vision is framed around social justice, digital transformation, and inclusive development. Emphasis is placed on:</p> <p>Overcoming inequality (Castillo, Boric)</p> <p>Embracing the Fourth Industrial Revolution (Piñera)</p> <p>Reinventing economic models post-COVID (AMLO): “We must reinvent ourselves in all areas.”</p> <p>PA leaders articulate a normative, transformative agenda.</p> <p>Discourse logic: Normative (justice, equity, opportunity)</p>	<p>The V4 vision is grounded in economic competitiveness, migration control, and resisting centralized EU policies. Strategic framing revolves around security and differentiated paths to climate goals:</p> <p>Morawiecki: “Economic growth determines the quality of life of our citizens.”</p> <p>Orbán: “We want to win from global economic change.”</p> <p>Heger: “We should focus on #regional coop & common interest.”</p>

		<p>V4 leaders stress pragmatism, regional power, and economic sovereignty.</p> <p>Discourse logic: Strategic (interest, resilience, competitiveness)</p>
<p>Crisis Response and Justification of Action</p>	<p>COVID-19 serves as a call for moral and systemic change.</p> <p>Responses are framed as ethical obligations:</p> <p>AMLO: “We did not seek loans... we supported the most vulnerable.”</p> <p>Piñera: “So that together we can overcome the impacts caused by this pandemic.”</p> <p>Crises become opportunities for social reinvention and youth empowerment.</p> <p>PA crisis discourse is moralistic and people-centered.</p> <p>Crisis framing: Ethical imperative for systemic change</p>	<p>Crisis discourse emphasizes practical coordination (especially on energy, migration, and Ukraine), with justifications rooted in national interest:</p> <p>Orbán: “We may disagree on Ukraine, but we cooperate on migration and low taxes.”</p> <p>Morawiecki: “Joint combating efforts... helped to obtain unprecedentedly high funds.”</p> <p>V4 discourse is instrumental and policy-driven.</p> <p>Crisis framing: Functional response for stability</p>
<p>Identity, Values, and Solidarity Appeals</p>	<p>The PA discourse heavily appeals to democracy, inclusion, Latin American identity, and youth solidarity:</p> <p>Castillo: “The common interest of our peoples.”</p> <p>Boric: “We must protect regional cooperation mechanisms.”</p>	<p>V4 leaders invoke regional unity, but often anchor identity in sovereignty and resistance to Brussels:</p> <p>Orbán: “Standing up for our farmers... defending low taxes against Brussels.”</p> <p>Morawiecki: “We adopted a declaration of solidarity with the Czech Republic.”</p>

	<p>AMLO: “The government must represent everyone.”</p> <p>PA emphasizes shared democratic identity and intergenerational fairness.</p> <p>Regional identity: Democratic, youth-oriented, integrationist</p>	<p>V4 emphasizes sovereignty, resilience, and self-determination.</p> <p>Regional identity: Sovereigntist, values-based, EU-critical</p>
<p>Power Assertion and Representation Claims</p>	<p>Power is claimed through ethical leadership and democratic legitimacy, often in opposition to perceived internal or external injustice:</p> <p>AMLO: “She is not, for us, legally and legitimately the president of Peru.”</p> <p>Petro: “An insult to democracy... the popular will was simply mocked.”</p> <p>PA asserts power via moral high ground and people’s mandate.</p> <p>Institutional posture: Reaffirm cooperation, moral critique of formality</p>	<p>V4 leaders assert structural influence in EU debates, often opposing centralization:</p> <p>Babiš: “There is no over-voting possible on migration.”</p> <p>Morawiecki: “In the EU, everyone counts with our opinion as a partner.”</p> <p>Heger: “We support territorial integrity & NATO accession.”</p> <p>V4 asserts power via institutional leverage and bloc influence.</p> <p>Institutional posture: Conditional EU engagement, regional assertion</p>

Note. Author’s own elaboration.

The comparative analysis of political leadership discourses within the Visegrad Group and the Pacific Alliance shows distinct models of regional leadership, reflecting two contrasting political cultures and ideological orientations.

While both integration frameworks articulate a shared commitment to cooperation, stability, and representation, their rhetorical styles and underlying principles diverge sharply, showing how Central European and Latin American leaders construct authority and legitimacy in different ways.

V4 leaders such as Viktor Orbán, Mateusz Morawiecki, and Andrej Babiš adopt a pragmatic and assertive tone centered on national sovereignty, regional influence, and strategic autonomy. Their leadership discourse presents unity as a means of strengthening political leverage within Europe, positioning the V4 as a collective force that defends shared interests against external pressures.

Leadership is expressed through strategic calculation and institutional coordination, projecting strength, efficiency, and control. In contrast, leaders within the Pacific Alliance Sebastián Piñera, Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO), Gabriel Boric, and Pedro Castillo construct an inclusive and moral vision of leadership grounded in solidarity, social responsibility, and shared prosperity. Their discourse elevates cooperation as an ethical duty, emphasizing empathy, equality, and collective empowerment over institutional dominance.

When articulating their long-term vision, the V4 frames its strategy around economic competitiveness, migration control, and resistance to centralized EU governance. Its leaders speak in terms of strategic interests, pragmatic cooperation, and resilience, portraying regional policy as a matter of adaptation and strength. The Pacific Alliance, by contrast, envisions progress through social justice, innovation, and inclusive growth. Its leaders emphasize normative transformation addressing inequality, embracing digital modernization, and redefining economic models in response to post-pandemic realities presenting reform as both a practical and moral mission.

Crisis narratives reinforce this divergence. The V4 views crises as opportunities for institutional coordination and stabilization, focusing on effective management of challenges such as energy, migration, and security. Their discourse is functional and policy-oriented, framing crises as tests of collective efficiency. The Pacific Alliance, on the other hand, interprets crises through an ethical lens, framing them as moments that demand solidarity, moral responsibility, and systemic change. COVID-19 is repeatedly invoked as a call to protect the vulnerable, empower youth, and promote inclusive recovery, transforming adversity into a moral mandate for renewal.

Identity and solidarity also take different forms. The V4's rhetoric of unity is rooted in sovereignty, cultural resilience, and skepticism toward supranational institutions. Its leaders emphasize autonomy and national pride, often contrasting their regional values with those of Brussels. The Pacific Alliance, by contrast, builds its identity on democracy, cooperation, and regional inclusivity. Leaders evoke a Latin American sense of community that transcends borders, championing dialogue, fairness, and intergenerational equity.

Finally, power and representation are expressed through opposing logics. V4 leaders assert influence through institutional participation and coordination, seeking recognition and leverage within the EU while resisting perceived centralization. The PA's leaders, however, claim power through moral and democratic legitimacy challenging injustice and defending popular sovereignty. Their authority derives not from institutional dominance, but from ethical positioning and the defense of collective values.

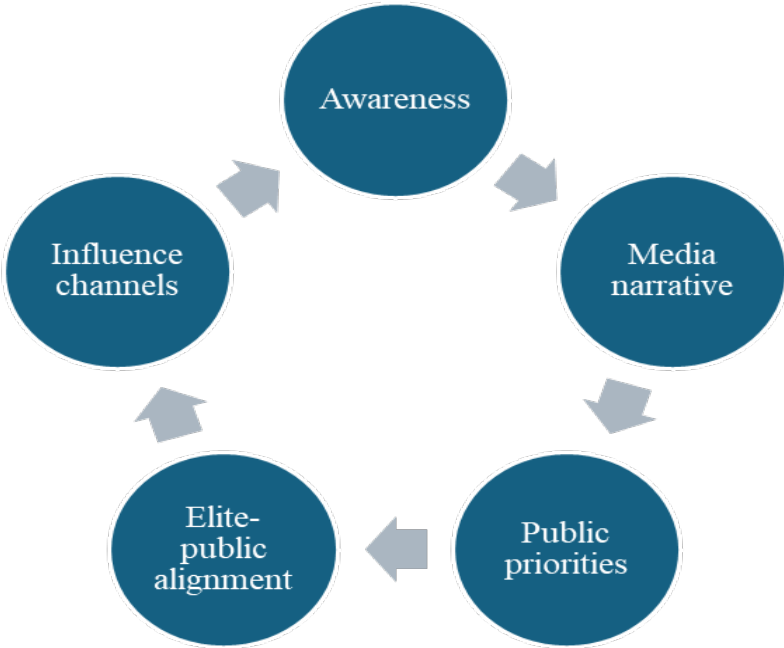
To conclude, the Visegrad Group embodies a strategic and realist discourse, grounded in sovereignty, pragmatism, and regional leverage, while the Pacific Alliance advances a normative and reformist model based on inclusion, moral authority, and cooperation. These distinct rhetorical patterns highlight how regional alliances construct legitimacy and identity: one through power and autonomy, the other through solidarity and ethical purpose.

5.5 Public Opinion Dimension

Research question 4: What are the dominant narratives surrounding regional integration within the public sphere, and how do citizens' opinions influence or reflect official discourse? How do citizens' views align with or differ from the narratives advanced by political leaders within their respective governments?

Public opinion data was presented in chapter IV section 4.5. Here are the categories selected for the discourse analysis from 2019 to 2023, using media, surveys, and public opinion data:

Figure 17. PA and V4 Public Opinion discourse categories



Source: Compiled by the author.

Public discourse surrounding the Pacific Alliance and the Visegrad Group between 2019 and 2023 reveals distinct dynamics shaped by elite narratives, public opinion, and external events.

Pacific Alliance

The first set of public opinion discourses under analysis focuses on citizens’ perceptions, media narratives, and survey data surrounding the Pacific Alliance between 2019 and 2023. Together, these sources illustrate the limited yet steady visibility of the Alliance within the public sphere, where direction tends to concentrate around summit periods, high-level meetings, and milestone announcements.

those of policymakers and business leaders rather than citizens or civil society. While there is approval of Asia-Pacific alignment, it rarely translates into grassroots momentum. Academic and press narratives continue to describe the Alliance as a model of “open regionalism,” supported by elites and tacitly accepted by a public more responsive to economic gains than institutional debates.

Below are direct quotes from public opinion surveys and media sources that support the chapter with empirical evidence and illustrative discourse in both the Pacific Alliance (PA) and Visegrad Group (V4):

Category	Discourse
Public Support & Economic Framing	<p>“73% of Latin Americans support economic integration and 63% support political integration in Latin America” (Garnero, Trombetta & Merino, 2024)</p> <p>This aligns with the chapter’s argument that the economic benefits, free trade, digital economy are central to the public acceptance of PA integration.</p>
Awareness & Engagement Gap	<p>“Three-quarters of Latin Americans between the ages of 16 and 25 support regional integration, which is encouraging news for regional integration efforts” (Instituto para la Integración de América Latina y el Caribe, 2022)</p> <p>The strong generational support shows that PA appeals primarily in terms of pragmatic, youth-driven economic optimism, rather than deep civic participation.</p>
Elite-Led Narratives with Public Backing	<p>While no direct public quote is available here, the IDB finding above strongly suggests that public backing is contingent on positive economic expectations, reinforcing that elite discourse on open regionalism resonates but is contingent.</p>

generally perceived as meaningful, especially in Slovakia, where 70% of the population considered it important. This visibility has enabled the public to actively engage in regional debates, especially around migration, security, and geopolitical alignment. Public opinion polls reveal consistent resistance to EU migration quotas, with the media and populist actors reinforcing cautious or xenophobic attitudes. GLOBSEC survey (2024) found that by 2024, 39% of Slovaks saw the U.S. as a threat while only 20% considered Russia threatening, highlighting the penetration of pro-Kremlin narratives into the public sphere.

Divisions among V4 elites are reflected in the media and public opinion. Hungary and Slovakia have leaned toward more Russia-friendly rhetoric, a position amplified by nationalist media ecosystems. For example, Viktor Orbán’s statement, *“Concerning who is to blame for the war, that will be decided following the conflict”* echoes similar sentiments circulating in pro-government Hungarian media (Beck, 2024). On the other hand, Poland and the Czech Republic have adopted clear pro-Ukraine positions, with Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk calling Vladimir Putin a “war criminal”, a view supported by popular opinion and reflected in mainstream Polish and Czech outlets (Beck, 2024). The divergence has created two distinct public narratives, leading to friction both among leaders and among citizens.

Category	Discourse
High Awareness & Local Perceptions	<p>In 2021, 69% of Hungarians, 65% of Slovaks, 52% of Czechs, and 49% of Poles had heard of the V4; 70% of Slovaks and roughly half of Czechs considered it important (Gyárfašová & Mesežnikov, 2021).</p> <p>This confirms the chapter’s assertion that the V4 has high visibility and perceived significance in public consciousness.</p>
Migration Discourse: Polarization & Xenophobia	<p>GLOBSEC Trends 2024 - Slovakia: “49% perceive Russia as a threat, a noticeable increase from 21% in 2021” (Hajdu & Klingová, 2020)</p>

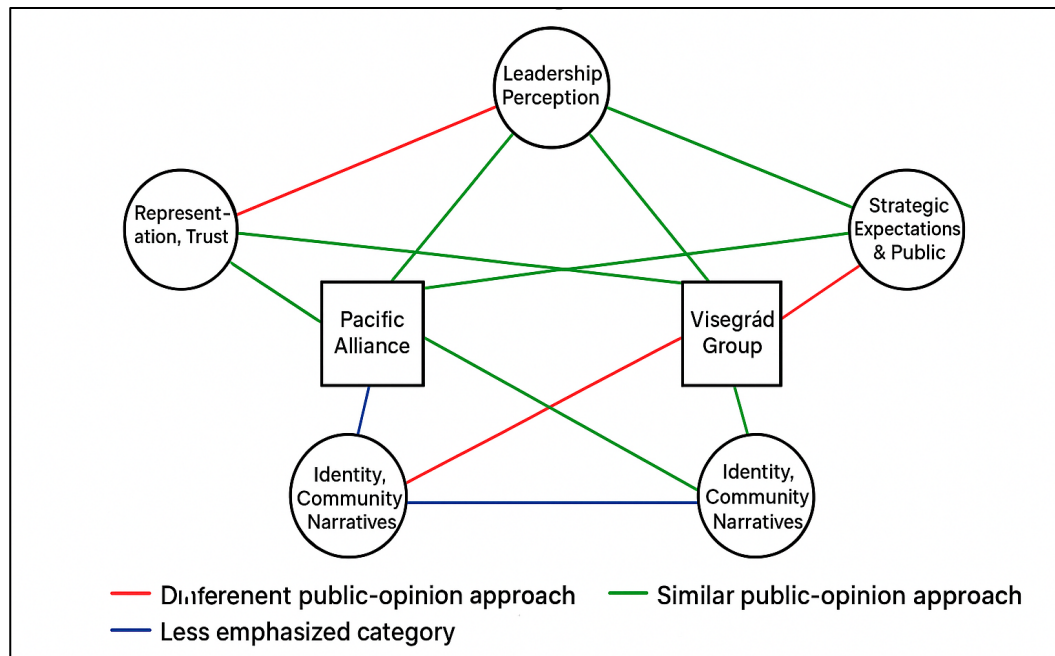
	This shift toward seeing Russia as a threat reflects a dual-track narrative populist resistance in some quarters, pro-Western shifts in others resonating with elite divisions on migration and security.
Elite-Public Alignment and Divisions	GLOBSEC Trends (2020): “The majority of people ... do not feel threatened by Russia. “They are our brother/sister nation” (Hajdu, Klingová, Milo & Sawiris, 2020). This public sentiment reflects Hungarian and Slovak elite positioning, reinforcing the chapter’s highlight of pro-Kremlin narratives echoing among citizens.
Trust & Cultural Bonds	While no direct quote was sourced, the high mutual trust rates (Czech-Slovak 79%) mentioned in the chapter are supported by regional polling data reflective of cultural familiarity and regional identity key to explaining public dynamics.

5.5.1 Public opinion dimension Comparison

Figure 20 offers a visual synthesis of the comparative analysis of public-opinion dynamics surrounding the Pacific Alliance and the Visegrad Group based on survey data, media narratives, and public-perception reports collected between 2019 and 2023. The figure captures how citizens in both regions engage with issues such as leadership perception, trust, identity, strategic expectations, and community narratives, highlighting the degree of alignment and divergence in the way these themes emerge across the two blocs.

The color-coded connections illustrate where public attitudes converge such as shared expectations for economic stability or perceived leadership roles and where they diverge, particularly in areas such as identity-based narratives or trust in regional representation. By identifying similarities, differences, and categories with weaker public salience, the figure reveals the complex ways citizens in Latin America and Central-Eastern Europe evaluate their respective regional groupings, offering insights into the deeper public discourses that shape the social foundations of each cooperation framework.

Figure 20. PA and V4 public opinion categories comparison.



Note: Visualization generated with Discourse Network Analyzer (DNA) Software

The above patterns show that in both the Pacific Alliance and the Visegrad Group, political discourse has been successful in shaping public narratives around economic integration. In Latin America, economic framing dominates, but the discourse remains top-down, with limited public contestation. In Central Europe, elite division over migration and Ukraine has fostered a polarized and reactive public discourse, with bottom-up dynamics more visible, particularly through social media.

Table. 15 PA and V4 Public opinion dimension comparison.

Category	Pacific Alliance	Visegrad Group
Awareness	Regional integration has relatively low everyday salience: public attention rises around summit cycles or during economic stress, but it rarely translates into	Operates in a more visible public environment. Recognition of the V4 reaches majorities in some member states by 2021 (around 69% in Hungary

	sustained popular identification.	and 65% in Slovakia), enabling regional cooperation to become a more concrete object of domestic political debate and citizen positioning.
Media narrative	Media largely reproduces an economic-pragmatic storyline: the group is framed as an open platform for trade expansion, mobility, and external partnerships—especially with the Asia-Pacific. Editorial framing reinforces the idea that the Alliance represents commercial openness and future-oriented integration, producing a relatively stable narrative environment with limited sustained counter-framing.	Media narratives mirror a more divisive political landscape. On migration, sovereignty and border protection narratives dominate and are reinforced across political and media arenas. On Ukraine, media discourse becomes nationally segmented: pro-Ukraine narratives in Poland and Czechia coexist with more ambivalent or Russia-tolerant framing in Hungary and, at times, Slovakia, intensifying polarization rather than cultivating a shared regional storyline.
Public priorities	Citizens broadly support the idea of economic integration (with regional survey evidence indicating roughly 73% support), but this support is conditional and instrumental: it is tied to	More securitized and identity-adjacent. Migration policy becomes a high-salience issue linked to border control and sovereignty, while the war in Ukraine generates a

	<p>perceived benefits and weaknesses when economic conditions deteriorate. Everyday priorities, employment, public services, poverty reduction, and basic infrastructure, regularly surface as benchmarks against which elite narratives of trade success are judged and sometimes rejected.</p>	<p>second, highly polarizing agenda that divides publics along national and ideological lines.</p>
<p>Elite-public alignment</p>	<p>Primarily top-down: political elites and institutional messaging frame integration as a pragmatic economic project, and public acceptance tends to follow so long as promised benefits appear plausible. The alignment is therefore stable but shallow, less a shared identity than a conditional endorsement of a policy instrument.</p>	<p>Alignment can be strong where elite consensus is strong, as seen in support for hardline anti-migration positions in Hungary (with polling figures often cited around 72% support in pro-government measurements). However, alignment fractures when elites diverge, most clearly on Ukraine: competing elite frames are reflected in public discourse and can harden into mutually exclusive narratives that weaken the sense of a coherent V4 community.</p>

Influence channels	Runs predominantly through institutional communication, summit diplomacy, and mainstream media amplification; citizen participation is visible but episodic, often confined to comments during public broadcasts or individual social media reactions. The result is a transmission model in which elites set the interpretive frame and publics respond mainly as evaluators of performance.	More interactive and conflict-driven. Social media functions as a major arena for bottom-up amplification, contestation, and agenda-setting, alongside rallies, protests, and segmented media ecosystems that intensify polarization. This produces feedback loops in which publics do not merely receive frames but actively reshape them, often pushing regional discourse into sharper identity and geopolitical confrontation.
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Ultimately, the degree and quality of public participation serve as key differentiators between the two blocs. The PA’s discourse remains institutionally stable but socially thin, while the V4 exhibits volatile but engaged public opinion, especially around issues of identity and geopolitics. These differences suggest that while both regions may achieve alignment on surface-level policy goals, their depth of societal integration and resilience in the face of external crises vary substantially.

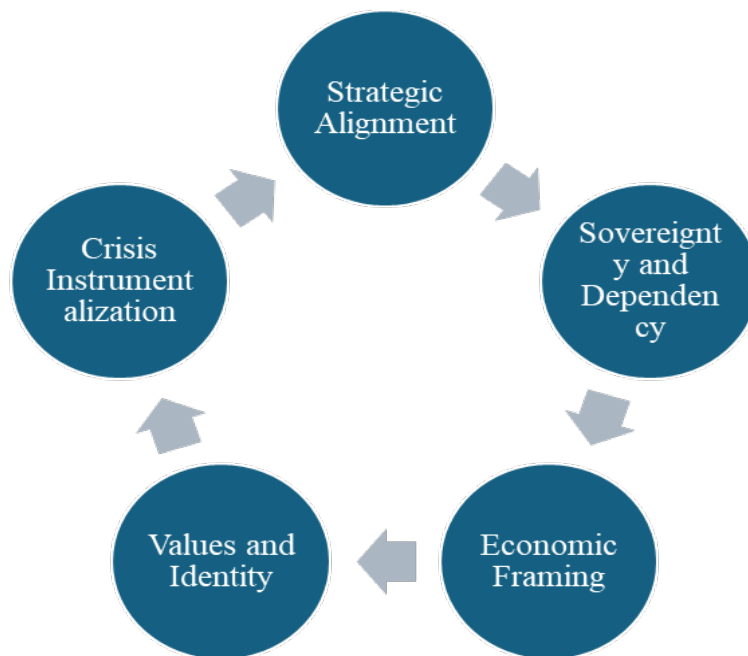
Moving the focus from how regionalism is received domestically, the External Influence Dimension examines how outside actors and structural pressures, great-power rivalry, international institutions, extra-regional partnerships, and transnational media or disinformation, might reinforce or redirect public narratives and regional cohesion.

5.6 External influence Dimension

Research question 5: How have global crises such as migration and the COVID-19 pandemic shaped the political discourse within the Pacific Alliance and the Visegrad Group? How have external events influenced the integration processes within these groups?

The external influence analysis focuses on a curated set of official statements, summit communiqués, and diplomatic speeches issued by the United States, the European Union, ASEAN, China and Russia between 2019 and 2023, which collectively shape the geopolitical environment surrounding the Pacific Alliance and the Visegrad Group. These documents reveal recurring terms and discursive patterns that highlight how each external actor positions itself in relation to the two regional initiatives emphasizing the following external influence categories selected for the discourse analysis:

Figure 21. PA and V4 external Influence discourse categories



Source: compiled by the author

Together, above themes form a broad-based lens through which to understand how external powers shape and are represented in the discourse of regional integration. Crises like the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ukraine war, or migration surges act as catalysts for external influence to be renegotiated. During such events, foreign actors are either praised or blamed depending on their

European influence over the Pacific Alliance focused on sustainability, digital transformation, and post-COVID recovery, especially through joint PA-EU communiqués between 2020 and 2023. According to the High Representative Mogherini (2019), the Diplomatic Service of the European Union, the EU consistently cast the PA as a like-minded partner: *"The European Union is committed to strengthening its political, economic and cooperation ties with the Pacific Alliance. The Alliance is a driver of regional integration in Latin America, with whom we have a solid friendship and we share fundamental values, a strong belief in multilateralism and a joint commitment in promoting the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals"* (Pacific Alliance, 2019).

From the opening, the text emphasizes relational and normative dimensions, stating that the parties are *"Resolved to reaffirm ties of friendship, solidarity, strong economic relationship and cooperation among them,"* which positions the partnership not merely as transactional but as rooted in trust and continuity. This sets a tone of collaboration that underpins the entire declaration.

The declaration repeatedly invokes shared values as a discursive anchor, highlighting that the cooperation is *"Guided by common values of democracy, rule of law and respect for human rights, among others."* By foregrounding these principles, the text situates economic and technical cooperation within a moral and political framework, signaling that the alliance is aligned with broader norms of liberal internationalism. Phrases such as *"Convinced of the importance of promoting multilateralism and a rules-based global order"* further reinforce the discourse of normative alignment, framing the partnership as contributing to global stability and legitimacy rather than solely bilateral gains.

Economic integration is presented in discourse as both pragmatic and mutually beneficial. The declaration asserts the parties' commitment *"to enhance solid, productive and lasting ties, based on...a shared vision on open trade and investment, and sustainable development."* This phrasing constructs economic cooperation as an ethical and strategic project, linking trade liberalization with sustainability and framing integration as a tool for socio-economic development rather than purely profit-driven exchange.

The declaration also discursively constructs the partnership as forward-looking and technically oriented, emphasizing operational collaboration in areas such as *“regional economic integration and business climate; financial integration; regional development; education and student mobility; digital strategies; small and Medium Sized Enterprises; climate, environment and green growth; innovation, science and technology.”* By enumerating these areas, the text presents the PA-EU relationship as multidimensional and adaptive to contemporary challenges such as digitalization, sustainability, and human capital development.

The commitment to coordination and evaluation: *“The modalities of the specific actions will be agreed upon by experts of the Pacific Alliance and the EU, who will report periodically to the Pacific Alliance’s National Coordinators and the representatives of the EU”* embeds a discourse of structured implementation and accountability. This frames cooperation not as abstract aspiration but as concrete, measurable, and systematically monitored, which discursively strengthens legitimacy and credibility.

Finally, the declaration’s language frequently combines normative, economic, and operational registers, reinforcing a vision of partnership that is value-driven, strategically oriented, and practically actionable. Statements such as *“Their intention to avoid duplication of initiatives and to assess, on a regular basis, progress made towards the achievement of common objectives”* strengthen a discourse of efficiency, reflexivity, and mutual accountability, framing the PA-EU partnership as a model of cooperative governance.

In sum, the discourse of the Joint Declaration constitutes a synthesis of normative rhetoric, economic pragmatism, and technical coordination. Through repeated references to shared values, multilateralism, and sustainable development, coupled with detailed operational commitments, the declaration constructs the PA-EU partnership as both ethically grounded and strategically sophisticated, emphasizing its multidimensional, outward-looking character.

United States of America

No formal group-level declaration, agreement, or joint communiqué was issued between the Pacific Alliance and the United States during 2019-2023. Official Pacific Alliance records for this period

of a wider North American economic recovery. He stated: “*We have to review the strategy... rethink how inefficient the neoliberal economic model has been,*” and advocated for a sovereignty-based recovery rooted in anti-corruption and fiscal restraint.

The narrative of sovereignty through resilience also resonated with U.S. official statements: “*The Pacific Alliance represents a model of regional economic integration... The United States will continue to support efforts that enhance economic ties between the PA and North America*” (U.S. Department of State, 2021). This language found receptive echoes in bloc-level declarations such as the Declaration of Cali (2021), which affirmed shared democratic principles and multilateral commitments.

The absence of a group-level U.S.-Pacific Alliance agreement during 2019-2023 contrasts sharply with the density of U.S. bilateral relations with individual Alliance members.

The United States maintains free trade agreements with all four Pacific Alliance members (Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Peru), forming a robust legal and economic foundation for engagement that reduces pressure for a new bloc-to-bloc instrument. This structure is documented in U.S. Congressional Research Service reporting (2024).

Finally, the U.S. has held observer status in the Pacific Alliance since 2013, which enables dialogue and technical cooperation but does not entail collective negotiations or joint declarations. This institutional role remained unchanged throughout 2019-2023. During this same period, the Pacific Alliance did pursue agreements with other external partners (e.g., Singapore), demonstrating that the lack of a U.S. agreement reflects policy choice and strategic preference, not institutional incapacity.

ASEAN-China

Relations between the Pacific Alliance and ASEAN are best understood not through a single treaty or free trade agreement, but through a consistent set of discourses and institutionalized practices articulated in ministerial statements, work plans, and official press releases between 2019 and 2023.

Figure 24. PA- ASEAN-China Discourses 2019-2023 Word Cloud.



Source: Generated from <https://simplewordcloud.com/>

Morales (2020) research describes the Alliance’s pro-Asia-Pacific integration posture including economic and political projection, of which China is a central component as an enduring part of its mission, even if this projection has not yet converted into official China-Alliance negotiated documents.

First, both organizations frame their relationship as a peer-to-peer inter-regional dialogue between two successful regional integration mechanisms. Repeated official language emphasizes “*strengthening ties between the two regional mechanisms*” and sustaining regular ministerial and coordinators’ meetings. This discourse constructs PA-ASEAN relations as symmetrical and cooperative, rather than hierarchical or donor-recipient.

Second, a dominant narrative is open regionalism and support for free trade. Joint statements consistently reaffirm commitment to “*promoting free trade*” and to an “*open, rules-based multilateral trading system,*” often explicitly referencing the WTO. This positions the PA-ASEAN relationship as a response to global protectionist pressures and trade uncertainty, especially salient in the post-2019 and pandemic-era context.

Third, PA-ASEAN discourse highlights connectivity and resilience in the face of global challenges. Ministerial declarations refer to shared challenges such as protectionism, climate change, post-pandemic recovery, and disruptive technologies, arguing that cooperation and exchange of best practices are necessary. This framing legitimizes inter-regional cooperation as a pragmatic tool for economic resilience rather than a geopolitical alignment.

Fourth, since around 2020, there has been a clear shift toward digital economy and innovation discourse. This is institutionalized through the ASEAN-Pacific Alliance Work Plan 2021-2025, which explicitly references cooperation on the digital economy, e-commerce, and the Fourth Industrial Revolution, and links Pacific Alliance initiatives such as the Regional Digital Market with ASEAN digital frameworks. Digital cooperation thus becomes a forward-looking, non-controversial pillar of the relationship.

Fifth, official statements emphasize inclusive growth through MSMEs and people-to-people exchanges. MSMEs are repeatedly described as a “*vital driving force*” of both regions’ economies, while tourism, education, and cultural exchanges are framed as tools to deepen societal connectivity beyond trade figures alone.

Finally, the relationship is marked by incremental institutionalization rather than legal integration. Cooperation is governed by frameworks, work plans, and periodic revisions, not by binding free trade agreements. The regular updating of the Framework for Cooperation and the continuation of the 2021-2025 Work Plan signal durability and intent, while preserving flexibility and strategic autonomy. This distinguishes ASEAN clearly from Pacific Alliance relations with major powers such as the United States or China, and highlights ASEAN as a uniquely “like-minded” regional partner rather than a hegemon or strategic rival.

China

Unlike the Pacific Alliance’s agreements with some Asian Associate Members (e.g., Singapore) (Pacific Alliance. (n.d.), Asean-Pacific Alliance), there is no record of a formal, co-signed Pacific

Alliance-China declaration or agreement from 2019 to 2023 that commits both sides to specific joint obligations or cooperation frameworks. This absence is itself a researchable finding (i.e., while China is an observer and economic partner across members, there is no bloc-level joint issuance of a formal statement with the PA as a collective).

In the public presentation *China and the Pacific Alliance: Regional Cooperation for the Next Decade* (2021), Pacific Alliance ambassadors highlighted that the member states offer integration advantages and stable economic opportunities for Chinese partners and noted continuous growth of trade with China as a priority external relationship. The diplomats framed the Alliance as an attractive gateway for Chinese economic cooperation in Latin America. These kinds of statements, while not formal pact texts, show discourse by Alliance representatives orienting toward China as part of economic projection. ASEAN-PA joint statements, often modeled on EU integration language, reinforced this discourse by referencing regulatory alignment and digital economy partnerships.

According to Morales, Pinto and Vergara (2025), China is framed as a prominent trade partner that poses both opportunities and structural challenges for Pacific Alliance countries. This commentary identifies China's economic role (trade concentration, asymmetries, commodity dependence) as a significant external factor influencing how the Alliance members position themselves, describing the Pacific Alliance as part of a broader trend of "regionalism with Asia-Pacific reach," in which China's economic influence is an important background dynamic. While not an Alliance government statement, this discourse points to how China's economic power shapes the context of the Alliance's external orientation (Ardila, 2024).

China's influence emerged more indirectly but visibly in PA discourse, especially through references to Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) infrastructure and Asia-Pacific value chains. Chilean and Peruvian leaders in PA summits from 2020 to 2021 explicitly noted Chinese FDI as key to their post-pandemic development. A defining moment came in January 2022, when Singapore joined the PA as an associate state. In that summit, Singapore's Prime Minister celebrated the agreement as a "*landmark moment*" for connectivity and deepened Asia-Latam cooperation reinforcing China's discourse of shared prosperity via "*open regionalism*." By 2025, China's

Special Representative of the Chinese Government on Latin American Affairs Qiu Xiaoqi had clearly situated the PA within its Asia-Pacific strategic framework: “*We should remain committed to open regionalism... dialogue and partnership rather than confrontation.*” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, 2025).

Lechuga-Cardozo (2021) explains China is the largest Asia-Pacific market for many Pacific Alliance countries, especially Chile and Peru, a fact that shapes diplomatic and economic discourse around the Alliance’s global positioning even if not formalized in joint texts.

Visegrad Group

The external influence analysis is based on a selected set of official statements, summit declarations, and diplomatic speeches issued by the United States, the European Union, Russia, and ASEAN-China between 2019 and 2023. Together, these sources delineate the broader geopolitical environment in which the Pacific Alliance and the Visegrad Group operate. The documents reveal recurring vocabulary and discursive patterns that illustrate how each external actor frames its relationship, emphasizing themes such as economic cooperation, security and defense considerations, market access, strategic alignment, and normative expectations.

European Union

Relations between the Visegrad Group and the European Union were shaped less by new institutional agreements than by recurring political statements and EU institutional communications during this research period. Joint V4 declarations consistently framed the group as “*a constructive part of the European Union,*” emphasizing coordination among Central European states while reaffirming commitment to EU membership and unity (V4 Joint Statements, 2006-2025).

governments must uphold the rule of law, press freedom, and shared EU values” (EU Commission, 2020) leaders such as Viktor Orbán offered rebuttals. In his 2021 speech assuming the V4 presidency (Visegrad Group, 2021), Orbán stated: “We do not support international initiatives that would lead to tax increases... In migration we do not favour compulsory distribution...” reflecting a sovereignty-first narrative that clashed directly with EU expectations. This tension surfaced clearly in domestic rhetoric and continues to influence the V4’s posture toward EU integration.

United States of America

The Visegrad Group, by contrast, portrayed a far more polarized discursive landscape shaped by sharp divisions in both leadership and public opinion. With the United States, the bloc largely presented unified messaging around defense, security, and energy diversification. The 2020 V4 programme of the presidency (The Visegrad Group, 2020) affirmed: *“The V4 will continue supporting the strengthening of transatlantic cooperation. We emphasize the importance of the United States continued political and military commitment to NATO and Europe’s security. At the same time, the V4 will continue increasing investment in our own security to reinforce NATO’s overall capabilities and contribute to the operations and missions of the Alliance. Our objective is to meet the goal of spending at least 2% of the GDP on defence, as decided at the NATO 2014 Summit in Wales.”*

This narrative resonated with Poland and the Czech Republic, where leaders such as Prime Minister Morawiecki praised U.S. ties as essential for European security. Such messages aligned with U.S. strategic positioning, which described the V4 as *“essential partners in advancing European security and stability”* (State Department, 2020).

The data reveals a relationship that is security-driven, largely bilateral in practice, and embedded in transatlantic institutions, especially NATO. At the strategic level, U.S. policy documents frame Central Europe as a core component of European and transatlantic security. The U.S. National Security Strategy (2022) identifies Europe as a priority region and emphasizes deterrence, democratic resilience, and alliance cohesion, while the U.S. National Defense Strategy (2022) highlights NATO’s eastern flank as a key focus of U.S. defense posture. Although neither

Economic relations are reflected in investment data rather than trade agreements. According to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (2023), U.S. foreign direct investment stocks in Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovakia remained significant throughout 2019-2023, reinforcing the narrative of economic partnership and strategic investment, even in the absence of a V4-level economic framework.

A further dimension of the relationship appears in normative and governance-related figures. The U.S. State Department's annual Country Reports (2024) on Human Rights Practices for V4 states repeatedly assess democratic governance, judicial independence, and media freedom. These reports introduce a normative layer to U.S.-V4 relations that parallels, and sometimes reinforces, EU-level scrutiny.

Finally, the United States Department of State (2025) dataset is characterized by important institutional absences. There is no U.S.-V4 treaty, no formal recognition of the Visegrad Group as a negotiating partner by the United States, and no permanent U.S.-V4 cooperation mechanism outside NATO. These absences are verifiable through the U.S. treaties reports and evidence that cooperation remains bilateral and alliance-based rather than bloc-to-bloc. Taken together, the input from 2019 to 2023 depicts U.S.-Visegrad relations as highly strategic but weakly institutionalized at the regional level. Security cooperation through NATO, energy diversification, investment flows, and normative assessments dominate the empirical record, while the lack of collective agreements confirms that the V4's relevance to Washington is primarily geopolitical rather than institutional.

Russia

Relations between the Visegrad Group (V4) and Russia between 2019 and 2023 are documented primarily through EU and NATO-related information, national-level diplomatic statements, energy statistics, and security developments, rather than through V4-Russia institutional frameworks. The empirical record shows a relationship that is asymmetric, fragmented, and increasingly securitized, especially after 2022.

Diplomatic discourse further illustrates fragmentation within the V4 prior to 2022. While the government of Poland (2021) consistently adopted a confrontational stance toward Russia, Hungary maintained comparatively pragmatic rhetoric and bilateral initiatives, particularly on energy cooperation (e.g., the Paks II nuclear project²¹). These differences are visible in national government statements and bilateral agreements rather than in V4 joint declarations.

EU sanctions regimes adopted in response to Russia's actions in Ukraine (from 2014, intensified after 2022) legally bind all V4 states, limiting diplomatic and economic ties with Russia regardless of national preferences. Council of the EU decisions and regulations provide the formal legal framework governing this dimension (European Council for the European Union, 2024).

Finally, as with the United States, institutional absences are empirically significant. There is no V4-Russia agreement, no permanent dialogue mechanism, and no recognition of the Visegrad Group by Russia as a regional interlocutor. Russia's engagement remains bilateral and often contentious, while V4 coordination on Russia-related issues is largely mediated through the EU and NATO (European Council for the European Union, 2024).

Taken together, the data from 2019 to 2023 depict V4-Russia relations as increasingly conflictual and externally constrained. Energy dependence and selective bilateral agreements characterized the pre-2022 period, while the post-2022 environment is dominated by security confrontation, sanctions, and strategic decoupling. The absence of cooperation might represent that the Visegrad Group's relationship with Russia is shaped less by regional diplomacy and more by EU and NATO frameworks responding to geopolitical rupture.

ASEAN-China

An examination of official outputs issued by the Visegrad Group reveals a notable absence of explicit references to the ASEAN in V4 joint statements, declarations, communiqués, or official posts. A systematic review of the V4's publicly available document archive for this period

²¹ Hungarian Government, Paks II Nuclear Power Plant Project:
<https://www.paks2.hu/web/en>

including prime ministers' and foreign ministers' joint statements shows that ASEAN does not appear as a named partner, interlocutor, or strategic reference.

Figure 28. V4-ASEAN-China Discourses 2019-2023 Word Cloud.



Source: Generated from <https://simplewordcloud.com/>

An examination of official outputs issued by the Visegrad Group reveals a notable absence of explicit references to the ASEAN in V4 joint statements, declarations, communiqués, or official posts. A systematic review of the V4's publicly available document archive for this period including prime ministers' and foreign ministers' joint statements shows that ASEAN does not appear as a named partner, interlocutor, or strategic reference.

This absence is analytically significant. During the same period, V4 documents frequently address relations with the European Union, NATO, the United States, Russia, and China, indicating that the omission of ASEAN is not accidental but reflects prioritization in V4 external discourse. Where Asia is referenced more broadly, it is typically through bilateral work with individual countries or via EU- or NATO-mediated frameworks, rather than through bloc-to-bloc language involving ASEAN.

The lack of ASEAN references contrasts sharply with other regional groupings such as the Pacific Alliance which maintain regular ministerial meetings and joint work plans with ASEAN. In the V4

case, no comparable institutionalized dialogue, ministerial mechanism, or co-signed declaration exists in the 2019-2023 timeframe. This suggests that ASEAN has not been constructed discursively as a collective partner within the V4's regional foreign-policy narrative.

To summarize, the 2019-2023 record indicates that the Visegrad Group's relation with ASEAN is characterized less by articulated policy or public diplomacy and more by discursive silence. This absence itself constitutes an empirical finding, highlighting the selective nature of the V4's external orientation and underscoring the limits of its collective outreach beyond Europe and the transatlantic space.

China

In contrast to ASEAN, China does appear explicitly in the Visegrad Group's published materials during the period primarily through EU-China framing and V4+ dialogue planning, rather than through a dedicated V4-China partnership document. A key example is the V4 Foreign Ministers + Germany Joint Statement (2020), which places China squarely in the context of EU external relations and calls for a calibrated approach: "*Given the growing complexity of EU-China relations, a need for a strategic and balanced relationship ... should be underlined at the upcoming high-level EU-China meetings.*" This formulation is important for discourse analysis because it constructs China not as a V4 partner per se, but as an actor managed through EU-level strategy and coordination.

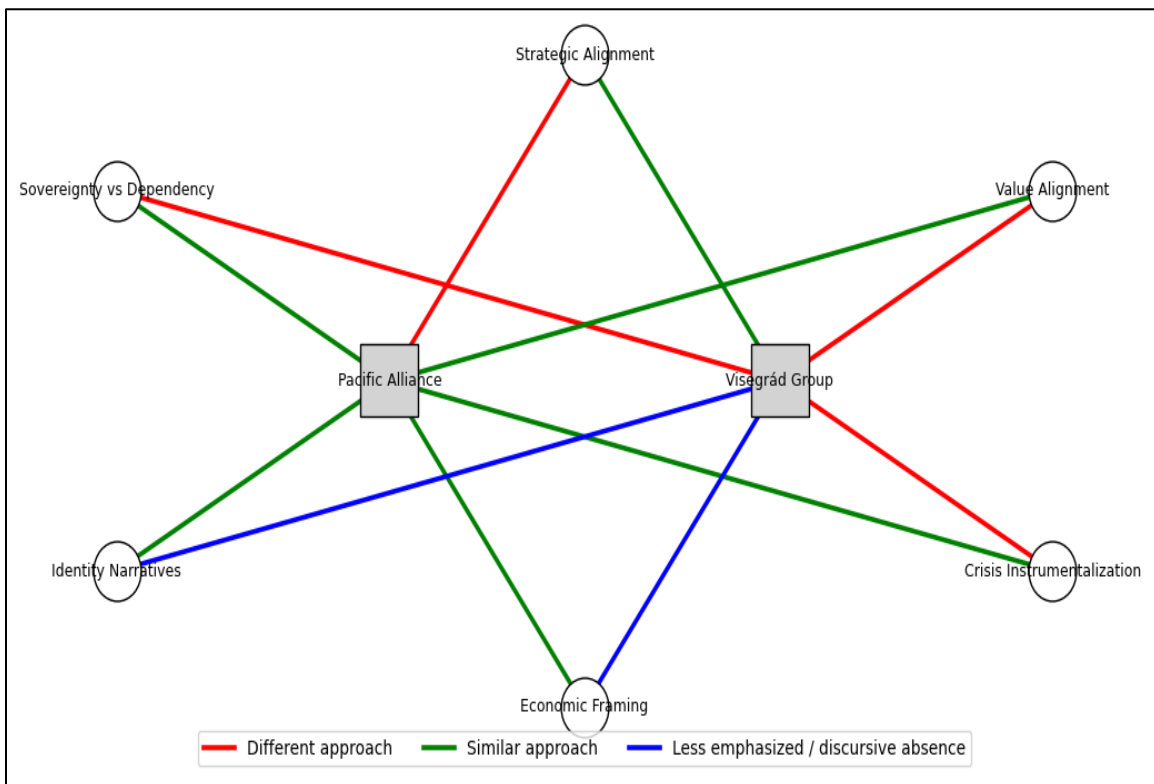
China also appears in V4 presidency programming as part of the "V4+" diplomatic architecture. The Hungarian V4 Presidency Programme (2021) (covering the post-pandemic diplomatic agenda and published as an official V4 presidency document) explicitly lists China among "*other global partners*" and schedules a concrete cooperation format: "*The Hungarian Presidency will also continue dialogue with other global partners, such as ... China,*" including a planned "*V4+China political directors' meeting.*" This type of reference reflects a discourse in which China is treated as part of a broader portfolio of external dialogues, without elevating it to a central strategic pillar comparable to the EU, NATO, or the United States.

China’s relationship with the Visegrad Group has evolved unevenly. Early summit declarations from the 16+1 platform (2019-2021) featured statements such as “*China views the Visegrad Group as an important hub in China-Europe relations and stands ready to expand cooperation in infrastructure, trade, and innovation.*” Hungary and the Czech Republic particularly under Prime Minister Babiš embraced this model, welcoming Chinese investment in rail, energy, and tech. However, from 2021 onward, Poland and Czechia voiced growing skepticism, citing transparency and geopolitical dependency concerns. As a result, V4 discourse split: Hungary maintained pro-China rhetoric, while other members distanced themselves from Beijing’s development model, reflecting a divergence in strategic orientations.

5.6.1 External Influence Dimension Comparison

Colour-coded connections in figure 29 illustrate how the Pacific Alliance is predominantly embedded in externally driven economic and partnership-oriented narratives, while the Visegrad Group is more strongly shaped by security-centric alignment, value conditionality, and crisis-induced external constraints.

Figure 29. PA and V4 External Influence categories comparison.



Note: Visualization generated with Discourse Network Analyzer (DNA) Software

Across all categories, the data shows two distinct external-influence logics. The Pacific Alliance mediates external power primarily through economic openness, diversification, and identity affirmation, allowing it to preserve narrative autonomy. The Visegrad Group, by contrast, is embedded in dense security and normative structures that amplify external influence during crises and constrain collective agency. These differences reflect not only geography but also the institutional design and strategic purpose of each regional grouping.

Table. 16 PA and V4 External dimension comparison.

Category	Pacific Alliance	Visegrad Group
Strategic Alignment	Aligns with global trade norms and Asia-Pacific connectivity without formal geopolitical commitments. Engagement with the United States, China, and ASEAN is framed through cooperation and openness rather than alliance politics. Alignment remains issue-based and reversible.	Embedded in NATO and EU security architectures, with the United States as the key external security actor and Russia framed as a threat. China appears marginally and cautiously, usually filtered through EU or transatlantic concerns.
Sovereignty and Dependency	Discursively framed as sovereignty through diversification. Cooperation with multiple partners is presented as a way to avoid dependence on any single power. Even asymmetrical economic relations (e.g., with China) are narrated as autonomy-enhancing.	While V4 governments rhetorically emphasize national sovereignty, the data reveal deep dependencies on EU funding, NATO security guarantees, and U.S. military presence. Post-2022 security dynamics further reduce autonomy.
Economic Framing	External actors are discussed primarily in terms of trade, investment, supply chains, digital economy, and market integration.	U.S. investment and pre-2022 Russian energy ties matter, but economic discourse is subordinated to security, sanctions, and EU

	Economic cooperation is the main channel through which external influence operates.	regulatory frameworks. China's economic role is notably downplayed or securitized.
Value Alignment and Identity Narratives	<p>External actors recognize shared commitments to open markets and democratic governance, but without monitoring or enforcement. Values function as legitimizing rhetoric rather than instruments of control.</p> <p>Projects a coherent identity as an open, outward-looking, Pacific-oriented economic alliance.</p> <p>External actors (ASEAN, Asia-Pacific partners) reinforce this identity by engaging in the Alliance as a bridge between regions.</p>	<p>EU institutions and, to a lesser extent, the U.S. frame relations with the V4 through rule-of-law compliance, democratic standards, and conditionality linked to funding and legitimacy.</p> <p>Presents itself as a Central European coordination platform, but external actors often frame it as a subset of the EU or NATO's eastern flank. ASEAN is absent from V4 identity discourse.</p>
Crisis Instrumentalization	<p>Crises (COVID-19, supply-chain disruptions) are framed as opportunities for reform and cooperation, particularly in digitalization and trade facilitation.</p> <p>External actors appear as partners in modernization.</p>	<p>COVID-19 and especially Russia's invasion of Ukraine intensify security alignment, normative scrutiny, and dependency on EU/NATO mechanisms, narrowing policy autonomy.</p>

Note. Author's own elaboration.

In conclusion, the Pacific Alliance maintained a consistent discursive line that integrates the perspectives of external actors into a cohesive, multipolar strategy focused on trade, sustainability, and infrastructure. The group's rhetorical flexibility allowed it to balance relationships with the U.S., EU, and China without provoking dissonance, reaffirming its image as a gateway to the Asia-Pacific. In contrast, the Visegrad Group exhibited increasing rhetorical fragmentation. While alignment with the U.S. remained strong on defense and NATO matters, divergent views on the EU and China exposed deeper divisions in national narratives and their geopolitical alignments.

6. CHAPTER VI: SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, CONCLUSIONS (DISCUSSION)

This research has examined key data sources, including speeches, policy documents, international surveys, and public opinion data from databases uncovering how political discourse is utilized to create and maintain momentum within the Pacific Alliance (PA) and Visegrad Group (V4), determining both internal dynamics and broader strategic goals. The findings highlight that political discourse within the PA centers around themes of neoliberal economic policies and regional cooperation. This is set against a backdrop of economic challenges and socio-political issues such as migration and inequality. In contrast, the V4, while promoting shared cultural and religious values, showcases a degree of Euroscepticism, maintaining sovereignty and addressing regional security concerns.

Both groups exhibit leadership-driven strategies, wherein political figures attempt to forge a unified identity and shared purpose through rhetoric. However, the effectiveness of these discourses varies due to political climates and public sentiment within each region. Challenges common to both alliances include political fragmentation, economic disruptions, and the public's trust deficit in governance, amplified by the pandemic's repercussions. The PA's integration efforts reflect an orientation towards building competitive economic partnerships, while the V4's discourse aligns more with balancing EU relationships and navigating geopolitical challenges like the Russian-Ukrainian conflict.

The research emphasizes that successful regional integration for both alliances depends on flexible governance, resilient leadership, and public participation. The strategic use of discourse as a tool not only facilitates cooperation but also influences policy formulation and implementation. Additionally, the discourse employed by political actors must continue evolving to connect public concerns and regional goals effectively.

This chapter has been structured to present and discuss the findings from the discourse analysis conducted on the Pacific Alliance (PA) and the Visegrad Group (V4). Its main purpose is to synthesize these findings with the theoretical frameworks explored earlier, offering a thorough

understanding of the relationship between political discourse and regional integration. Additionally, it aims to address the following research questions and hypotheses:

Research questions	Hypotheses
1.How has political discourse in PA and V4 shaped regional integration efforts over the last 5 years?	<i>H1: Political discourse within PA and V4 is mostly shaped by power dynamics, rather than cultural links or language and historical context, which influence policy formulation.</i>
2.What are the patterns, similarities and differences of communication and discursive dynamics among PA and V4 member states, and what factors contribute to these variations?	<i>H2: Political discourse (joint declarations creating momentum) within PA and V4 can create both opportunities and challenges for regional integration efforts, as it can facilitate more than hinder the development of common policies, norms, and institutions.</i>
3.How do political actors use discourse to influence decision-making processes and policy formulation?	<i>H3: PA and V4 Political leaders rely primarily on framing as a discursive strategy to shape perceptions, influence opinions, and advance their interests in decision-making.</i>
4.What are the dominant narratives and discourses surrounding regional integration alliances in citizens' opinions, and how do they impact public support or opposition?	<i>H4: Citizen's perceptions towards PA and V4 play a crucial role in constructing and reinforcing collective identity, values, and norms of the alliances, which can impact cohesion, legitimacy, and effectiveness.</i>
5.How have the world powers' discourses on recent global crises impacted PA and V4 integrations?	<i>H5: Communication patterns and discursive interactions among member states within the PA and the V4 vary, influenced by external actors such as the EU and the USA, which can affect alliance outcomes and dynamics.</i>

The content of this chapter will expose key insights derived from the comparative analysis of PA and V4, showcasing both commonalities and differences in their discursive practices and regional approaches. It will also reflect on the implications of these findings for policy development and leadership strategies within each group. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the broader impacts on regional stability and integration, alongside recommendations for future research that could extend or deepen the understanding of political discourses within international alliances.

6.1 Data Discussion

The quantitative data collected provided an overview of the economic dynamics and public involvement, forming a basis for deeper qualitative analysis of the political discursive strategies adopted by both the Pacific Alliance and the Visegrad Group. By examining trends in GDP growth and public awareness, as they shape the viability, perception, and long-term sustainability of their integration efforts will be revealed.

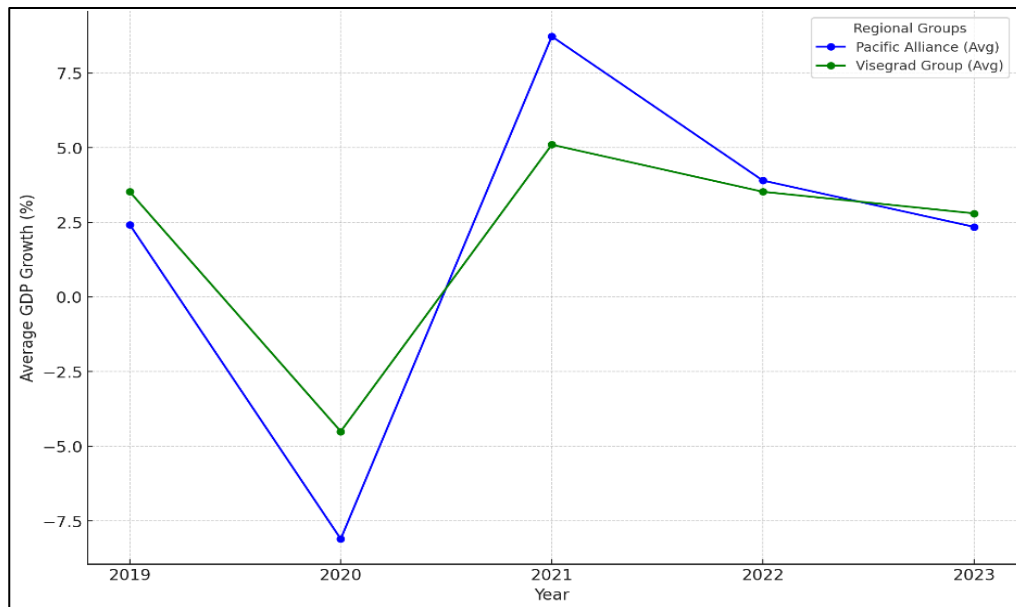
Economic trends

Economic trends, such as GDP growth and recovery trajectories, directly influence the ability of these alliances to deliver tangible benefits to their member states. Strong economic performance bolsters the legitimacy of integration, reinforcing the narratives of mutual prosperity and cooperation. Conversely, slower growth or uneven recovery among member states can exacerbate internal disparities, challenging the cohesion and strategic alignment within the organizations.

The Pacific Alliance is recognized as a key economic bloc in Latin America and the eighth largest economy in the world (Baker McKenzie, 2024). While The Visegrad Group has been reported as The V4 countries combined would constitute the 5th largest economy in Europe and the 12th in the world, with significant intra-group trade and robust partnerships, notably with Germany, marking steady economic growth that has outpaced the EU average (V4 Recharging Europe, n.d).

The economic trends of the Pacific Alliance (PA) and the Visegrad Group (V4) between 2019 and 2023 highlight the interplay between global challenges and regional dynamics. Both groups faced significant economic disruptions due to the COVID-19 pandemic as graph 5 illustrates:

Graph 5: Average GDP Growth Trends: PA vs V4 (2019-2023)

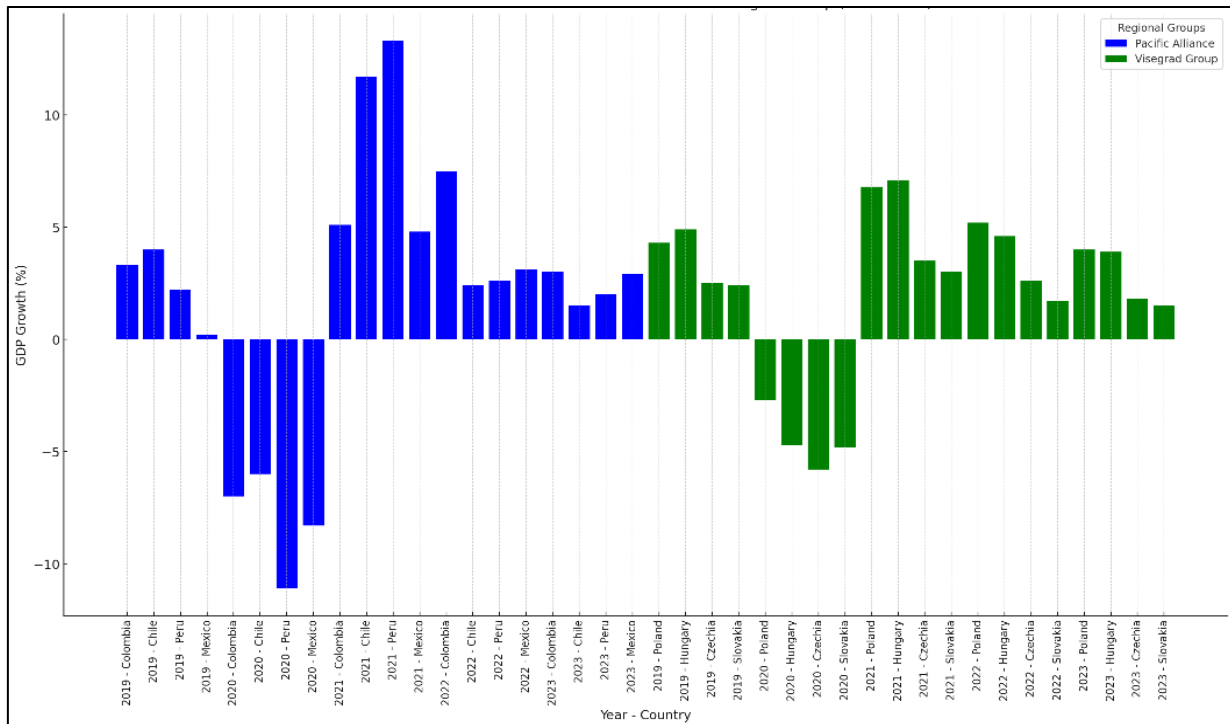


Source: Exported by author from <https://www.bakermckenzie.com/en/locations/latin-america/pacific-alliance> and <https://v4.mfa.gov.hu/page/v4-facts-infographics-tbc>

In 2019, the Pacific Alliance showed moderate growth, with GDP increases ranging from 0.2% in Mexico to 4.0% in Chile. The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 caused significant economic contractions, with Peru experiencing the steepest decline at -11.1%. Recovery followed in 2021, highlighted by Peru's exceptional growth of 13.3%, driven by a rebound in exports and domestic demand. Growth stabilized in 2022 and 2023, averaging around 3%, as the region faced challenges such as inflation and global economic uncertainties (Baker McKenzie, 2024).

For the Visegrad Group, 2019 marked strong economic performance, with Poland's GDP growing by 4.3% and Hungary's by 4.9%. The pandemic led to recessions in 2020, though less severe than in the Pacific Alliance, with GDP declines ranging from -2.7% in Poland to -5.8% in Czechia. Recovery in 2021 was robust, with Hungary achieving 7.1% GDP growth, driven by industrial production and EU recovery funds. Growth rates moderated in 2022 and 2023 due to challenges such as the war in Ukraine and energy supply disruptions, with GDP growth ranging from 1.5% to 4.0% (V4 Recharging Europe, n.d). Graph 6 shows the comparison between PA and V4 member states:

Graph 6. PA and V4 countries GDP growth (2019-2023)



Source: Exported by author from <https://www.bakermckenzie.com/en/locations/latin-america/pacific-alliance> and <https://v4.mfa.gov.hu/page/v4-facts-infographics-tbc>

It is interesting to note how the Pacific Alliance faced deeper economic contractions in 2020 compared to the Visegrad Group, reflecting vulnerabilities in sectors like tourism and commodities. While both regions experienced a recovery in 2021, the Visegrad Group benefited from EU support, whereas the Pacific Alliance's recovery was more uneven. External influences also varied, with the V4 affected by European geopolitical tensions and the Pacific Alliance navigating shifts in global trade policies and commodity prices.

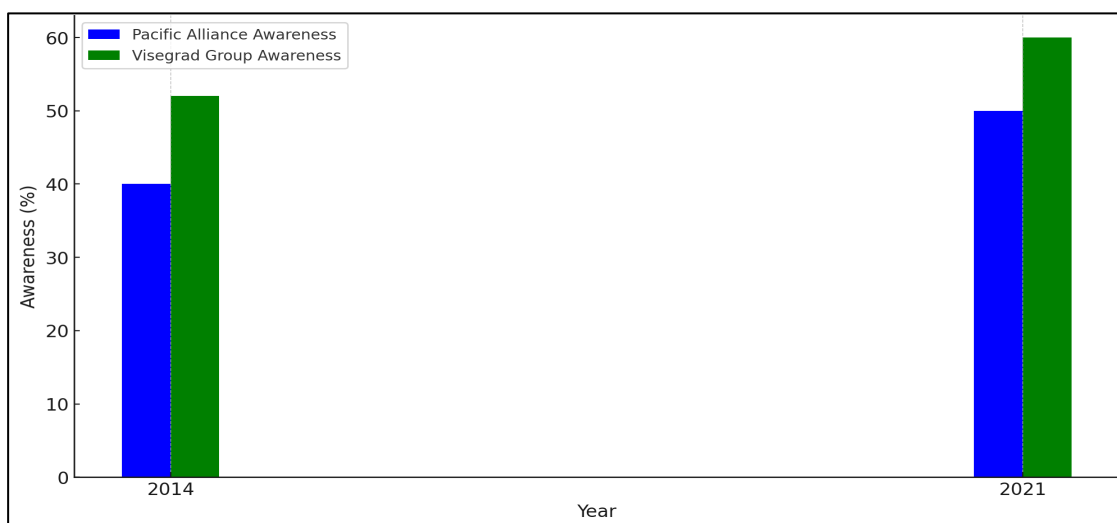
These trends highlight the role of regional cooperation and diversified economic strategies in building resilience to global disruptions. In the political sphere, The Pacific Alliance has navigated instability, social unrest, and the economic and public health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, complicating efforts to sustain public support. The Visegrad Group has encountered internal EU tensions related to migration policies and adherence to democratic values, impacting cohesion within the group, leading to public opinion trends with differing levels of awareness and support.

Public Opinion Trends

Public awareness and sentiment trends affect the social foundation of these alliances. Higher levels of public engagement, as seen with the V4, provide political leaders with greater leverage to advocate for integration policies and reinforce a sense of collective identity. Positive sentiment fosters trust and support, making it easier for governments to implement regional policies. In contrast, lower public awareness, as observed with the PA, limits the effectiveness of discourse on integration, creating a gap between institutional goals and public buy-in. This disconnect can impact regional initiatives and reduce the perceived relevance of the alliance.

In the PA, data from The Americas and the World 2014 survey indicated that substantial segments of the population lack awareness or clear opinions regarding the alliance's influence, which poses a constraint for deeper and more cohesive regional integration (Morales, Maldonado, & Schiavon, 2016). In contrast, V4 survey results reported by Gyárfášová and Mesežnikov (2021) show comparatively higher levels of public awareness within the Visegrad Group, particularly in Hungary and Slovakia, where 69% and 65% of respondents, respectively, reported familiarity with V4 activities, as illustrated in Graph 7.

Graph 7. PA and V4 Public awareness Trends



Source: compiled by author from Revista Mexicana de Política Exterior, núm. 106, enero-abril de 2016, pp. 133-164 and Visegrad Four as Viewed by the Public. Past Experience and Future Challenges Inštitút pre verejné otázky, Bratislava 2021

For the Pacific Alliance, awareness levels have been gradually increasing. However, specific survey data quantifying this trend during 2019-2023 is limited. The PA has undertaken initiatives to boost its profile, such as adopting a 2021-2025 Work Plan with ASEAN to strengthen ties and visibility (Alianza del Pacífico, 2021).

In contrast, the Visegrad Group has maintained higher public awareness levels, attributed to its longer-standing cooperation and more pronounced regional identity. The 2021 survey indicated that support for and belief in the V4 was highest in Hungary, followed by Slovakia, Czechia, and Poland.

These trends suggest that while both alliances are recognized within their regions, the V4's deeper historical roots and cohesive identity have resulted in higher public awareness compared to the relatively newer Pacific Alliance.

Moreover, economic and public opinion trends influence external perceptions and partnerships. Alliances with stronger public participation and economic performance are more likely to attract international investments and partnerships, further reinforcing their global influence. For the PA, increasing public awareness could strengthen its identity in Latin America and beyond. For the V4, maintaining high awareness and leveraging economic stability could enhance its strategic position within the European Union. The trends above highlight the need for cohesive strategies that address both economic challenges and the narrative frameworks necessary to sustain public and institutional support.

The following section goes through the political discourse data collected, providing an examination of the narratives, themes, and strategies that support the integration efforts of the Pacific Alliance (PA) and the Visegrad Group (V4). This exploration focused on the systematic gathering of speeches, policy documents, media coverage, and public statements to discover how political discourse shapes regional cooperation, influences decision-making processes, and impacts public and international perceptions.

6.2 Discourse Analysis Findings

By using Discourse Network Analyzer (DNA), the study has highlighted that discourses are aligned around key themes that shape public policies, regional cooperation initiatives, and the formation of regional identity. For the Visegrad Group, leaders' speeches and official documents, such as the 1991 Visegrad Declaration, highlight a strong focus on collective security, national sovereignty, and democratic principles.

V4's discursive strategies have emphasized historical and cultural unity, fostering a shared sense of identity that supports cooperative regional efforts. For instance, terms like “countries”, “economic” and “national” frequently appeared, signaling priorities in economic cooperation and security. Additionally, discourse related to migration policy, demonstrated by joint declarations between 2019 and 2023²², highlighted the group's stance on border control and security. These discourses have promoted policy cohesion on issues like EU relations and migration, though sometimes at the cost of friction with broader EU directives.

For the Pacific Alliance, discursive strategies have consistently emphasized economic integration and cooperation with a strategic focus on the Asia-Pacific. The 2011 Lima Declaration²³ prominently featured terms like “integration”, “cooperation” and “Pacific” illustrating the alliance's commitment to trade liberalization and socioeconomic development. Recent statements have continued to reinforce free trade as essential for enhancing competitiveness and resilience, as seen in agreements like the 2022 Free Trade Agreement with Singapore²⁴. The rhetoric has supported policy initiatives aligned towards open markets and investment, emphasizing inclusivity and democratic values. However, while economic growth has been a focal point, there has been acknowledgment of challenges such as ensuring social equity and environmental sustainability.

Patterns in discourse for both alliances have revealed themes that align with their respective integration goals. Table 17 shows a summary of the patterns identified after examining the

²² <https://www.visegradgroup.eu/home/documents#>

²³ <https://alianzapacifico.net/en/download/declaracion-de-lima-abril-28-de-2011/>

²⁴ <https://alianzapacifico.net/en/instruments-alcaps/>

language, themes, and framing used by PA and V4, to analyze how power, ideology, and meaning are constructed:

Table 17. Patterns in Discourse Among PA and V4

Discourse	Pacific Alliance	Visegrad Group
Language and Framing	Focuses on economic liberalization and competitiveness.	Integrates cultural heritage and democracy into its discourse.
	Centers on pragmatism and modernity, framing economic integration as a pathway to global competitiveness but lacks strong cultural resonance.	Aligns with constructivist theories of regionalism, where shared narratives legitimize political goals.
	<p>Prioritizes economic pragmatism.</p> <p>Positions itself as a forward-looking formation engaged with Asia-Pacific markets.</p> <p>Faces challenges in constructing a unifying narrative due to the diversity of member states.</p>	<p>Emphasizes cultural and historical continuity.</p> <p>Frames itself as a bridge between East and West.</p> <p>Uses discourse to navigate internal tensions while maintaining external influence.</p>
Representation of Political Actors	PA leaders adopt a technocratic tone, emphasizing measurable outcomes like trade volumes and economic growth. This minimizes the role of cultural or historical identity affecting integration narratives.	Uses discourse to position the group as aligned with EU norms while preserving national sovereignty. The framing of migration debates shows a calculated balance between cooperation and resistance to EU policies.

	Discourse slightly involves citizens, framing integration primarily as an elite-driven process focused on economic outcomes.	Discourse acknowledges citizen participation more explicitly, emphasizing shared cultural heritage and democratic values as binding factors.
Power Dynamics and Authority	Reflects economic dependency on global markets, with frequent references to Asia-Pacific integration, signalling external power dynamics.	Asserts regional influence within the EU, leveraging shared values and security concerns. This positions the bloc as a cohesive voice in European politics.
	Both alliances legitimize their actions through declarations and summits. V4's use of historical documents reinforces a narrative of continuity and shared struggle, while PA legitimizes its objectives through forward-looking economic agreements.	
Tensions and Contradictions	The focus on economic narratives creates a tension between achieving integration goals and addressing social and cultural disparities. The lack of a cohesive cultural narrative weakens its collective identity.	Sometimes oversimplifies cultural unity, triggering geopolitical divergences among member states.
Temporal Shifts in Discourse	Shows a shift toward sustainability and inclusive growth, partly influenced by global trends such as climate change and post-pandemic recovery.	Exhibits increasing emphasis on migration and security, responding to geopolitical pressures and EU debates.

Note. Author's own elaboration.

The political discourses of the Pacific Alliance (PA) and the Visegrad Group (V4) present both differences and similarities rooted in their cultural, political, and strategic orientations. While each alliance's discourse is shaped by its unique historical and regional context, commonalities emerge in their commitment to integration and cooperation.

V4's discourse is deeply rooted in a shared cultural and historical narrative that emphasizes Central European identity. This is evident in documents like the 1991 Visegrad Declaration, which stresses common cultural heritage, democratic values, and national sovereignty. The frequent use of terms related to "spiritual" and "values" suggests a focus on cultural unity as a basis for political cooperation. In contrast, PA's discourse centers more on economic and strategic alignment rather than cultural unity. While PA members share a Latin American identity, their discourse is less focused on cultural heritage and more on economic cooperation and regional development.

Regarding political elements, Visegrad Group's discourses on migration, for example, reflect concerns over external mandates and a strong stance on border security. This political rhetoric aligns with the goal of maintaining control over national policies while cooperating at a regional level. Strategically, the V4 discourses on security have reinforced its position as a mediator between Eastern and Western Europe.

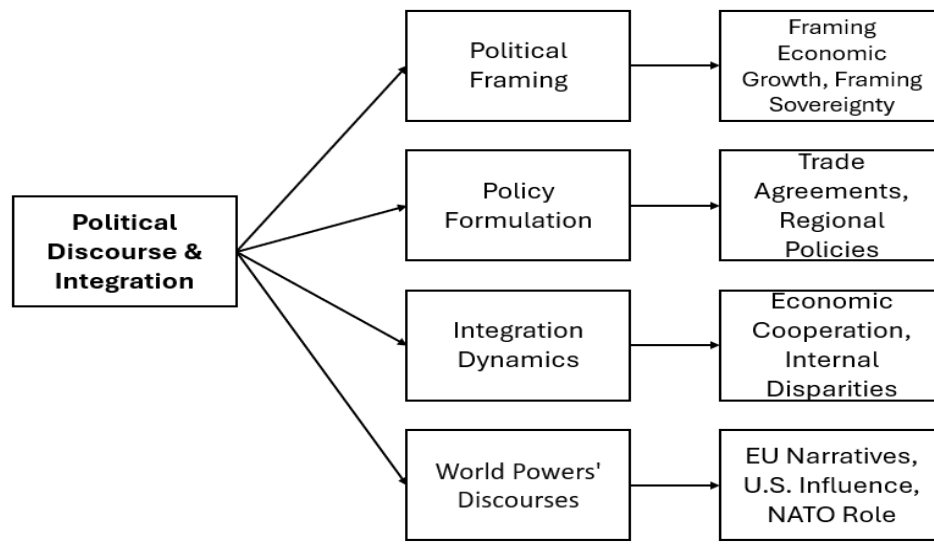
PA's political discourse might seem less defensive and more oriented towards building partnerships, however, this approach also presents challenges, such as addressing social inequalities and environmental sustainability. The balance between fostering growth and ensuring socio-economic benefits remains a significant issue in PA's discourse.

The discourse analysis revealed several interconnected themes that directly inform the evaluation of the hypotheses. Each hypothesis was analyzed considering the research findings, addressing key dimensions such as discourse dynamics, public perceptions, and external influences, exploring how PA and V4 political discourse shapes regional integration dynamics.

6.2.1 Hypothesis 1

Political discourse within PA and V4 is mostly shaped by power dynamics, rather than cultural links or language and historical context, which influence policy formulation.

Figure 30. Conceptual diagram of political discourse and integration themes.



Note. Author's own elaboration.

Political discourse within the Pacific Alliance (PA) and the Visegrad Group (V4) is heavily shaped by power dynamics, which dominate over cultural or historical narratives in influencing regional integration efforts. In the Pacific Alliance, power dynamics manifest through a strong emphasis on global trade alignment.

Member states like Mexico, with its significant economic size, often set the agenda, prioritizing agreements with major economies such as the United States and partnerships like the PA-Singapore Free Trade Agreement. This outward-facing strategy is designed to enhance competitiveness in global markets but often overshadows internal disparities among member states. Smaller economies like Peru and Colombia find it challenging to assert equal influence, especially given political instability that disrupts cohesive policy-making.

In contrast, the Visegrad Group reflects power dynamics through its strategic positioning within the European Union. Political discourse emphasizes sovereignty and resistance to EU mandates, particularly on sensitive issues like migration policy. Hungary and Poland often lead this rhetoric, framing integration as conditional and prioritizing national autonomy. The V4 also uses collective bargaining to secure EU funding, leveraging their economic and geopolitical significance as part

of the EU's eastern border. This inward-facing approach highlights the group's effort to maintain relevance and influence while resisting pressures perceived as damaging their sovereignty.

Both alliances prioritize power-oriented narratives in response to external pressures. The PA focuses on aligning with global trade systems to mitigate vulnerabilities tied to commodity dependence, while the V4 emphasizes regional solidarity and strategic autonomy to balance EU and NATO dynamics. However, power asymmetries within both alliances create challenges to cohesion. The PA struggles with Mexico's dominance and uneven public engagement, while the V4 navigates tensions between its more assertive and moderate members. These dynamics shape integration policies and reveal a pragmatic approach driven by geopolitical and economic priorities, underscoring the centrality of power dynamics in the discourse and strategies of both alliances.

Regarding the cultural and historical context, findings suggest that it plays a limited role in shaping their political discourse and policy formulation, serving more as rhetorical tool than foundational drivers of integration. In the Pacific Alliance, shared linguistic ties and colonial histories are rarely emphasized in political narratives. This lack of a strong cultural narrative weakens the alliance's regional identity and civic participation, while differences in political stability and economic priorities among member states, such as Mexico's North American trade focus compared to Peru and Colombia's resource export reliance, further complicate the development of cohesive cultural themes.

In the Visegrad Group, shared historical experiences like the legacy of communist rule and geographical proximity are more prominently referenced in political discourse, particularly to reinforce narratives of Central European solidarity. However, these cultural and historical references often aim to unify domestic audiences rather than as main drivers of integration policies. Political leaders in Hungary and Poland frequently invoke cultural heritage to resist EU policies, using identity as a justification for sovereignty-focused positions. Despite this rhetoric, practical policymaking often reflects divergent national interests, as seen in the more moderate stances of Czechia and Slovakia compared to the confrontational approaches of Hungary and Poland.

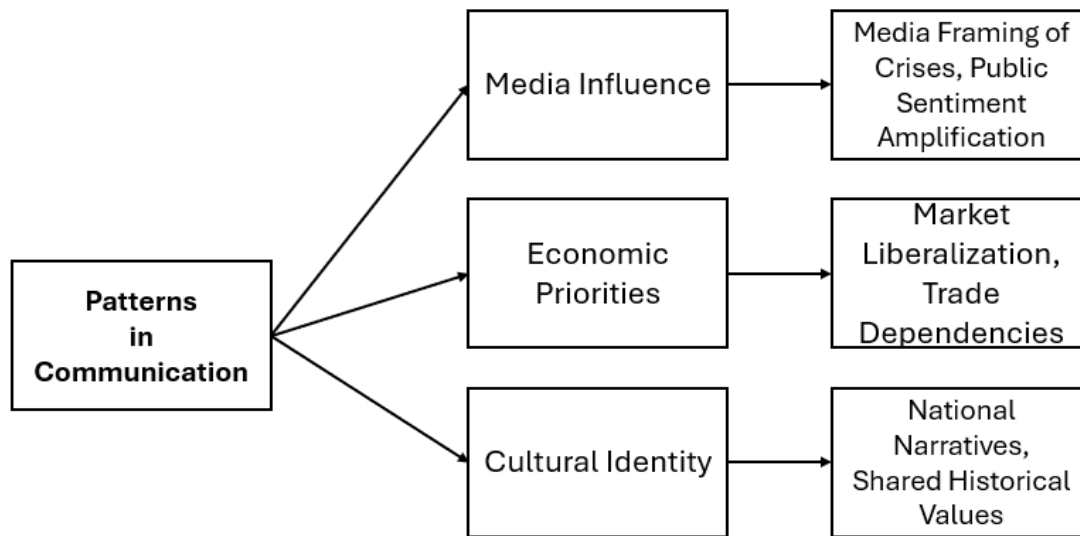
In both alliances, the limited role of cultural and historical factors reveals that contemporary regional integration efforts are shaped more by strategic considerations than by cultural solidarity or historical ties. Thus, hypothesis 1 is largely supported by the findings.

Findings	
In V4, historical and cultural context significantly shapes political discourse. Themes of shared European heritage, democracy, and regional solidarity feature prominently in declarations, suggesting that cultural links are deeply integrated into policy discussions.	PA's discourse emphasizes economic pragmatism and trade liberalization, with less focus on shared cultural or historical narratives. Power dynamics, particularly economic positioning within the Asia-Pacific region, dominate discussions.
Conclusion	
H1 is partially supported. While power dynamics are crucial in influencing PA's discourse, V4 discourse integrates cultural and historical elements, contrasting with the hypothesis.	

6.2.2 Hypothesis 2

Political discourse within PA and V4 can create both opportunities and challenges for regional integration efforts, as it facilitates more than hinders the development of common policies, norms, and institutions.

Figure 31. Conceptual diagram of patterns in communication.



Note. Author's own elaboration.

The communication and discursive dynamics within the PA and the V4 reveal distinct patterns that enable and constrain the advancement of integration efforts, aligning with the hypothesis that joint discourse can be a double-edged sword.

In the Pacific Alliance, communication patterns are predominantly technical. Joint declarations and trade agreements are central to the alliance's discourse. These narratives create opportunities by promoting international partnerships and aligning the bloc with global norms. However, the absence of a strong cultural or political identity limits the coherence of these communications. Member states often diverge in their policy priorities, with Mexico emphasizing North American trade while countries like Peru and Colombia focus on commodities. These differences reduce the effectiveness of joint declarations in fostering deep political integration, as the discourse remains outward-facing and transactional rather than inward-looking and cohesive.

On the contrary, the Visegrad Group's communication patterns are more politically charged. Joint declarations within the V4 frequently point out shared positions on issues such as migration policy, energy security, and EU governance, creating momentum for collective action in specific domains. This rhetoric facilitates the development of norms and policies aligned with regional interests. However, these same discursive dynamics also expose internal divisions.

The similarities between PA and V4 communication dynamics lie in their ability to use joint discourse to engage with external partners and advocate for shared interests. Both initiatives effectively leverage declarations to project influence and position themselves within broader geopolitical and economic structures. However, significant differences emerge in the content and focus of their discourses. Factors contributing to these variations include historical, geopolitical contexts and internal power dynamics.

The PA operates in a region marked by economic disparities and political instability, which shapes its pragmatic and market-driven communication style. Meanwhile, the V4's history of EU integration and shared geopolitical challenges, such as the war in Ukraine, drive its emphasis on political and cultural solidarity. Additionally, public awareness and engagement are higher in the V4, reinforcing the effectiveness of identity-based discourse, while the PA's relatively lower public involvement limits the resonance of its communications.

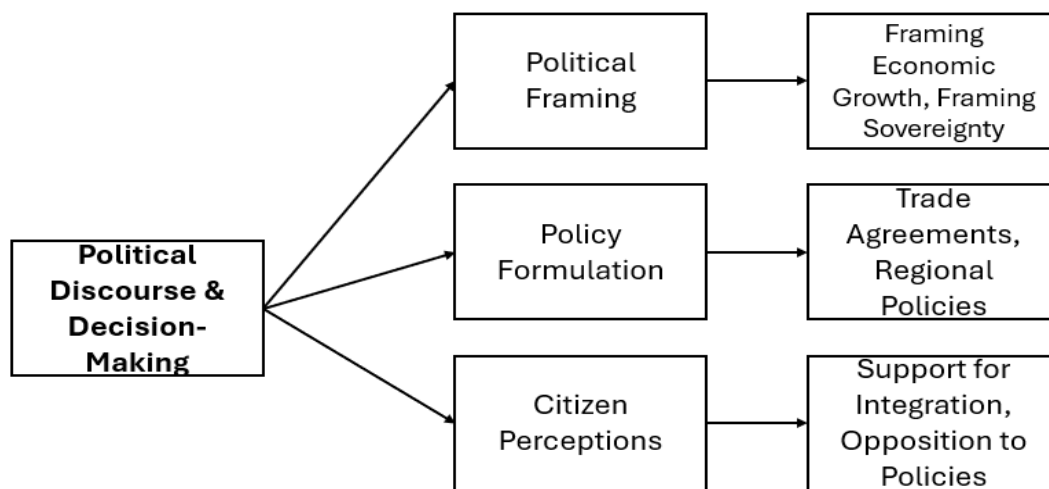
These findings support the hypothesis that political discourse creates both opportunities and challenges for regional integration. While political communication is an essential mechanism for fostering regional cooperation, its effectiveness depends on the ability of member states to align their priorities and balance external and internal demands.

Findings	
Joint declarations in V4, particularly on migration and EU relations, have created momentum for collective action but have also highlighted internal tensions, such as differing views on EU integration and migration policies.	PA's declarations, such as the Lima Declaration, emphasize cooperation and economic integration but face challenges in aligning diverse national priorities and addressing social inequalities.
Conclusion	
H2 is supported. Political discourse in both alliances fosters opportunities for policy alignment but also reveals challenges due to internal divisions and differing priorities.	

6.2.3 Hypothesis 3

PA and V4 political leaders rely primarily on framing as a discursive strategy to shape perceptions, influence opinions, and advance their interests in decision-making.

Figure 32. Conceptual diagram of political discourse and decision making.



Note. Author's own elaboration.

Through selective emphasis and rhetorical techniques, leaders in both integration frameworks use discourse to align public opinion, address internal and external challenges, and advance their policy agendas. PA political leaders predominantly frame integration as a pathway to global competitiveness and sustainable development. For example, free trade agreements are framed as milestones that will expand access to global markets and enhance regional prosperity.

By emphasizing the benefits of integration, leaders foster support among stakeholders, particularly within the business community. However, framing is not limited to economic opportunities; it is also used to address challenges and manage public skepticism. Increasingly, PA leaders emphasize sustainability and inclusion in their discourse to counter criticisms of inequality and environmental degradation linked to trade liberalization. Despite this, the heavy reliance on economic framing limits its ability to engage with broader political and cultural themes, reducing its effectiveness in fostering a shared identity or addressing domestic disparities among member states.

Framing is also central to the V4's external negotiations, such as collective bargaining for EU structural funds. By highlighting the economic contributions and strategic importance, leaders frame integration as a reciprocal relationship that requires acknowledgment of Central Europe's unique needs. While this approach effectively consolidates support on specific issues, the diversity of framing strategies within the member states, ranging from Hungary's confrontational rhetoric to Slovakia's moderate tone, reflects the challenges of achieving cohesive decision-making and policy formulation.

Both the PA and V4 rely on framing to simplify complex issues, align stakeholder interests, and legitimize their positions. Framing as a discursive strategy also influences decision-making by shaping the parameters of policy debates and determining which issues gain prominence. The findings support the hypothesis that political leaders in the PA and V4 rely primarily on framing strategies to shape perceptions, influence opinions, and advance their interests in decision-making.

While framing strategies shape the broader discourse and guide how political leaders in both regional projects present migration-related issues, these discursive practices also become visible in specific policy priorities and initiatives. In the case of the Pacific Alliance, framing migration primarily through an economic and integration-oriented lens has translated into concrete measures that promote mobility within the region. By emphasizing the potential economic benefits of

migration and the importance of regional cooperation, the Alliance constructs migration not as a challenge but as an opportunity for development and labor market complementarity. This framing is particularly evident in policies designed to facilitate the movement of workers across member states.

One of the most significant aspects of the Pacific Alliance's migration discourse is its emphasis on labor mobility. The PA has prioritized the free movement of people, particularly skilled workers, to enhance economic integration. The introduction of the Pacific Alliance Visa in 2015 is a key example of how the region has facilitated labor migration, allowing citizens from PA countries to move freely. This initiative indicates the belief that regional migration can help address labor shortages, improve the flow of talent, and foster economic development.

Labor migration is viewed as an opportunity to strengthen the region's economies by enabling the movement of workers to fill gaps in sectors such as technology, agriculture, and services. For example, Mexico and Peru have focused on attracting skilled professionals from within the region to bolster their rapidly growing industries. Migration in this context is framed as a tool for economic development rather than a challenge to national security or cultural identity.

In addition to economic factors, the migration discourse in the Pacific Alliance also reflects strong humanitarian principles. Latin American countries, including the PA members, have seen significant numbers of refugees and asylum seekers arriving, particularly in the wake of the Venezuelan crisis. The humanitarian aspect of migration has become a central concern, with PA countries offering temporary residency and legal status to Venezuelans fleeing political and economic instability.

Countries such as Chile and Peru have enacted policies to support the integration of Venezuelan migrants, providing pathways for employment and social services. These measures reflect the PA's commitment to a human rights-based approach to migration, emphasizing solidarity and regional cooperation. This open stance contrasts with the restrictive policies of many European countries, particularly in the context of the refugee crisis.

Despite the overall openness of the Pacific Alliance to migration, the region is not immune to the challenges posed by large-scale migratory flows. For instance, Central American migration through

Mexico to the United States has had significant implications for the PA. Mexico, as a transit country, has become a focal point for discussions on managing irregular migration and offering humanitarian assistance to migrants from Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala.

The PA's approach to these challenges is characterized by a focus on regional solutions. While the bloc does not yet have a regional migration framework, member countries have worked to coordinate their responses to migration issues. This cooperation is evident in their efforts to manage migration flows more effectively while maintaining their commitment to human rights and economic integration.

In contrast to the Pacific Alliance, the Visegrad Group has adopted a more restrictive and security-oriented approach to migration. The V4 countries, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia have consistently framed migration as a national security issue, emphasizing the protection of national borders, sovereignty, and cultural identity. The migration discourse within the Visegrad Group is heavily shaped by populist and nationalist rhetoric, particularly in the context of the European refugee crisis.

A defining characteristic of the Visegrad Group's approach to migration is the emphasis on national sovereignty. The V4 countries have strongly opposed EU-led efforts to impose mandatory refugee quotas, arguing that such measures undermine their ability to control their borders and determine their own immigration policies. This resistance is particularly evident in Hungary, where the government has implemented strict border controls and built physical barriers to prevent migrants from entering the country.

Hungary's Prime Minister, Viktor Orbán, has been a vocal critic of the EU's migration policies, framing migration as a threat to Hungary's national identity, cultural values, and security. Orbán and other V4 leaders have portrayed migrants, especially those from Muslim-majority countries, as a potential source of terrorism, crime, and social destabilization. This narrative has been central to the V4's position on migration, where immigration is often viewed as a security threat rather than an economic or humanitarian issue.

In addition to national security concerns, the Visegrad Group's migration discourse is heavily influenced by fears about cultural preservation. Leaders in the V4 countries argue that large-scale

immigration, particularly from non-European countries, could threaten the social fabric of their societies. The perception that migration leads to the erosion of traditional European Christian values is a central part of the political discourse in countries like Poland and Hungary, where the dominant narrative frames migration as a challenge to the region's cultural homogeneity.

In the wake of the European refugee crisis, the V4 countries have strongly resisted the EU's efforts to redistribute refugees across the continent. Instead, they have advocated for a more restrictive approach, focusing on border control and externalization of migration management. This approach is also aligned with the rise of populism in the region, where migration has become a key issue in political campaigns and national debates.

While the Visegrad Group is generally resistant to refugee migration, it has been more open to economic migration. This is particularly evident in countries like Poland, which has seen a large influx of workers from neighboring countries such as Ukraine. The V4 countries rely on migrants to fill labor shortages, especially in sectors such as agriculture, construction, and manufacturing. However, this migration is often framed as temporary labor migration, rather than permanent resettlement.

The Visegrad Group's distinction between economic migration and refugee migration highlights the region's reluctance to integrate people fleeing conflict or persecution. While the V4 countries welcome migrants who can contribute to the labor market, they are far more hesitant to accept refugees, especially those who are seen as a burden on social services and welfare systems.

The migration discourses of the Pacific Alliance and the Visegrad Group reflect significant differences in their approaches to migration management. The Pacific Alliance, grounded in economic integration and humanitarian principles, tends to view migration as an opportunity for regional cooperation and development. The free movement of labor is seen as a way to foster economic growth and address labor shortages, while the region's response to the Venezuelan migration crisis points to a commitment to solidarity and human rights.

In contrast, the Visegrad Group's migration discourse is characterized by a focus on national sovereignty, security concerns, and cultural preservation. The V4 countries have framed migration as a threat to national identity, emphasizing the need for border control and restrictive immigration

policies. While the V4 countries are open to economic migration, they remain deeply skeptical of refugee migration, framing it as a challenge to social cohesion and security.

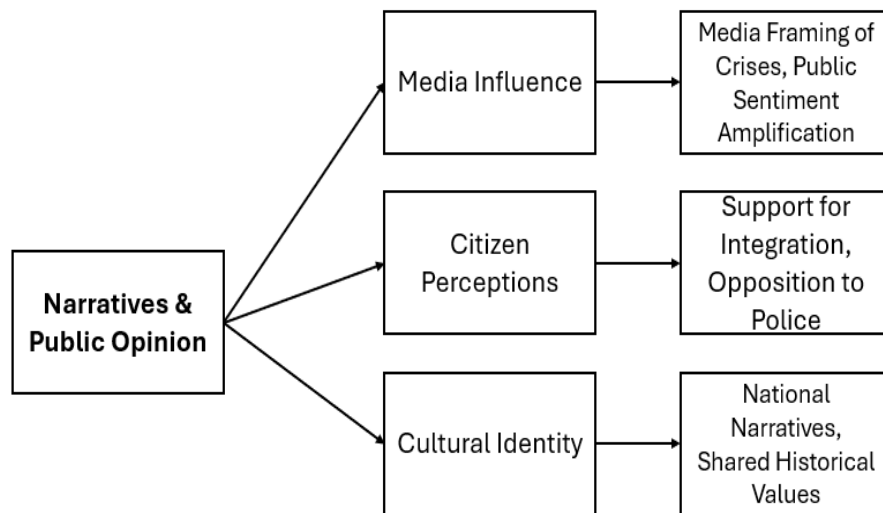
Despite these contrasting positions, both groups are responding to the global migration phenomenon in ways that reflect their unique geopolitical contexts and domestic priorities. The Pacific Alliance seeks to leverage migration for economic integration and regional development, while the Visegrad Group focuses on securing national borders and preserving cultural identity. As migration continues to shape the political and economic dynamics of both regions, these discourses will likely continue to evolve in response to changing global and domestic pressures.

Findings	
V4 leaders use framing to enhance political legitimacy and unity, particularly in security and migration debates.	PA leaders focus on framing trade liberalization and economic cooperation as pathways to regional prosperity.
Conclusion	
H3 is strongly supported. Leaders in both alliances strategically use framing to align policies with regional goals and to influence public and policy-maker perceptions.	

6.2.4 Hypothesis 4

Citizen perceptions toward the PA and V4 play a crucial role in constructing and reinforcing the collective identity, values, and norms of the alliances, which can impact cohesion, legitimacy, and effectiveness.

Figure 33. Conceptual diagram of narratives and public opinion.



Note. Author's own elaboration.

Public support plays a pivotal role in reinforcing or challenging the integration agendas. It influences whether governments continue to pursue deepened integration or reconsider their approaches to global trade and cooperation. When it comes to the political and social integration aspects of the Pacific Alliance, public support is more conditional. While many citizens appreciate diplomatic cooperation and peace-building efforts, there is also significant concern over the potential loss of sovereignty or political autonomy.

Since Latin America's 2019 mass protests, citizens' skepticism has been evident as well as public discontent regarding neoliberal economic policies that have been perceived as favoring elites and large corporations over ordinary citizens (Almeida, 2023). Public backing for the Alliance, therefore, is often tied to the perception that it can deliver tangible benefits for local communities, such as job creation, social services, and environmental protection.

As for the Visegrad Group, public opinion on the EU is more complex and varies across the region. Citizens in Poland and Hungary tend to support the government's Eurosceptic policies, which reinforce the V4's role as a counterbalance to EU integration. In contrast, public support for the EU remains strong in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, which can act as a constraint on the V4's confrontational stance towards Brussels. Public sentiment, therefore, directly shapes the ability of these regional alliances to either deepen their integration or face challenges in pursuing a common agenda.

In both alliances, citizen perceptions directly impact the legitimacy and effectiveness of regional integration efforts. When citizens view the alliance as aligned with their interests and values, public support strengthens collective identity and facilitates policy implementation. On the contrary, when perceptions are shaped by skepticism or unequal benefits, public opposition undermines cohesion and reduces the alliance's ability to achieve its objectives.

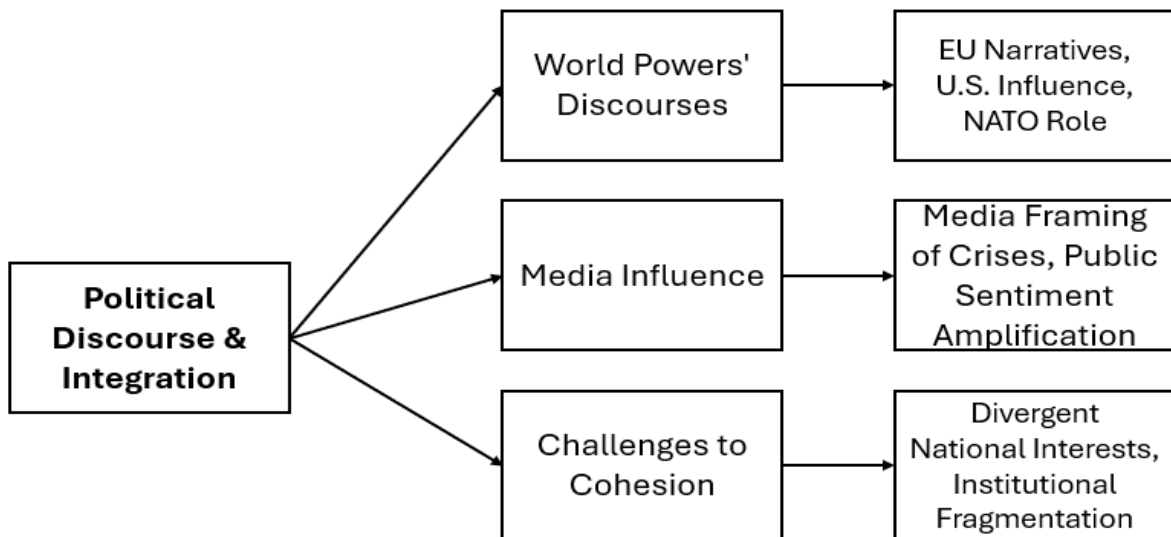
The findings support the hypothesis that citizen perceptions play a crucial role in constructing and reinforcing the collective identity, values, and norms of the PA and V4.

Findings	
In V4, citizen perceptions are closely tied to cultural identity and shared history, which reinforce collective norms and cohesion. However, populist narratives on migration challenge the inclusiveness of this identity.	In PA, citizen participation is more limited, with discourse primarily focusing on economic outcomes rather than cultural or identity-based narratives. This limits the alliance's ability to construct a strong collective identity
Conclusion	
H4 is partially supported. While citizen perceptions strongly influence V4's collective identity, this dynamic is weaker in PA, where economic narratives dominate over cultural or identity-focused engagement.	

6.2.5 Hypothesis 5

Communication patterns and discursive interactions among member states within PA and V4 vary, influenced by external actors such as the EU and the USA, which can affect alliance outcomes and dynamics.

Figure 34. Conceptual diagram of political discourse and integration.



Note. Author's own elaboration.

The research findings indicate that the discourses of world powers such as the United States, the European Union, and other global actors have significantly influenced the integration dynamics and communication patterns within the PA and the V4. These external narratives have shaped internal interactions, policy priorities, and the strategic alignment of member states, reinforcing the hypothesis that external actors impact alliance dynamics and outcomes.

Challenges tied to The Visegrad Group include not only the EU conflicting political agendas but criticism over perceived democratic weakness, judicial reforms, and media control in Hungary and Poland. This has undermined the group's cohesion and its credibility within the supranational organization.

Despite these political tensions, the V4 countries have largely benefited from EU membership, especially in terms of economic integration, infrastructure development, and EU funding. The EU's emphasis on regional economic cohesion and connectivity has shaped the V4's policies, especially regarding the modernization of infrastructure and economic competitiveness.

In contrast, the EU has been a critical external partner for the Pacific Alliance. Over the last five years, EU-PA relations have evolved through trade agreements, political dialogues, and developmental cooperation.

As indicated previously, in 2019, the EU and the Pacific Alliance finalized a modernized Free Trade Agreement (FTA)²⁵. This agreement aimed to increase bilateral trade and facilitate the movement of goods and services between the two regions. The EU's market access and its emphasis on sustainable development, human rights, and environmental issues have shaped the PA's policy discourse, pushing the Alliance towards adopting more progressive trade policies that integrate social and environmental standards.

On the one hand, the EU's emphasis on the green economy and climate change has affected the PA's integration agenda. EU environmental policies, particularly in the context of the Green Deal, have encouraged PA members to adopt sustainable development goals (SDGs) and incorporate them into their domestic policies and regional integration frameworks, supporting the Pacific

²⁵ <https://alianzapacifico.net/en/pacific-alliance-european-union/>

Alliance's efforts built on multilateralism and cooperation beyond trade, influencing its stance on human rights and democratic governance.

On the other hand, the United States, as a major external actor, has had a somewhat complex relationship with the Pacific Alliance due to the region's trade orientation and political preferences.

The US's trade policies under the Trump administration (2017-2021), including tariffs and protectionist measures (e.g., tariffs on steel and aluminum), were sometimes at odds with the PA's free-market ideals. However, under the Biden administration, the tone shifted toward more collaborative trade policies, with an emphasis on addressing inequalities and promoting sustainable growth.

Besides this, the USA's focus on security issues in the region, especially drug trafficking and organized crime, has been a point of convergence for cooperation. However, the increasing attention to China's influence have made it more relevant for the Pacific Alliance to assert its own regional identity. As a result, the Latin American group has looked to strengthen ties with the EU, China, and other Asian economies to reduce dependency on the USA.

The V4 countries' policy positions have also been shaped by discourses and actions from the USA in the last five years, particularly through its role within NATO and its stance on Russia and security in Eastern Europe. NATO's 2022 Strategic Concept identifies Russia as "the most significant and direct threat to Allies' security and to peace and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area" (NATO, 2025). This assessment has led to increased defense spending among member states and the deployment of additional forces to Eastern Europe.

The relationship between the V4 and Trump administration was characterized by a mixture of alignment on certain issues and divergence on others. The dynamics of this relationship were shaped by shared conservative values, skepticism of multilateralism, and differing strategic priorities while US-V4 relations under Biden reaffirmed its commitment to European security and multilateralism, seeking to re-engage with the EU on issues such as climate change, democracy, and human rights. However, some V4 countries, particularly Hungary, have continued to push back against certain US-led initiatives, especially on issues related to liberal democratic values and the rule of law.

The media has played a crucial role in mediating the influence of world powers' discourses on the PA and V4 by amplifying, reshaping, or countering narratives that impact public opinion, political discourse, and integration dynamics. It acts as both a conduit for external narratives and an arena where internal alliance tensions and priorities are debated and framed.

Local media in member states often localize external narratives to fit domestic contexts, creating variations in how integration efforts are perceived across member states. In the V4, Hungarian media focuses on cultural sovereignty, while Czech media emphasizes pragmatic economic and security considerations. In the PA, Colombian and Peruvian media highlight issues of inequality and development, while Mexican media often frames integration within the context of U.S.-Mexico relations.

World powers' discourses on global crises have a profound impact on the integration efforts of the PA and V4. In the PA, external narratives drive economic strategies but sometimes overshadow internal disparities, limiting cohesive development. In the V4, external influences strengthen regional security and defense cooperation but often intensify tensions between member states with divergent approaches to EU policies. These dynamics stress the influence of external actors on regional alliances, highlighting both the opportunities and challenges they create for internal cohesion and effectiveness.

Findings	
V4's communication patterns are heavily influenced by its relationship with the EU, particularly in debates over migration policy and regional security. External actors like the USA and Russia also shape discourse on energy and defense.	PA's discourse reflects its positioning in global trade networks, with significant influence from Asia-Pacific economies and the USA. These external pressures shape its focus on trade agreements and economic integration.
Conclusion	
H5 is supported. Both alliances exhibit communication patterns and discursive dynamics shaped by external actors, influencing their integration strategies and outcomes.	

6.3 Synthesis with Theoretical Framework

The interplay between regionalism and political discourse theories in the cases of the Pacific Alliance (PA) and the Visegrad Group (V4) discloses the ways in which regional integration is shaped by historical, cultural, and political dynamics. The theoretical framework of new regionalism offers an analytical lens to understand these differences. New regionalism, as articulated by scholars like Hettne and Söderbaum (2007), underlines the multidimensional and dynamic nature of regional integration, departing from the economically focused old regionalism to embrace political, cultural, and social dimensions. In this context, the PA and V4 illustrate divergent paths and outcomes in the regionalization process.

The PA exemplifies an approach heavily rooted in economic pragmatism, prioritizing trade liberalization and market integration. This focus aligns with older conceptions of regionalism that emphasized economic agreements, but it also highlights the challenges of achieving deeper integration without cohesive cultural and historical narratives. The lack of shared identity and the fragmented historical trajectories of its member states hinder the construction of a unified discourse that could mobilize public support or deepen political ties. This limitation resonates with Haas's (1975) critique of neofunctionalism when applied beyond Europe, as the spillover effects in PA remain limited to economic sectors without expanding to political or cultural domains.

In contrast, the V4 demonstrates a more holistic application of new regionalism, where shared historical and cultural narratives are leveraged to construct a regional identity that fosters integration. The V4's integration efforts are supported by a discourse rich in historical references and a sense of shared destiny, which aligns with Söderbaum's (2004) view that regionalism involves ideological and identity-based projects. This identity-driven approach enables V4 to navigate challenges such as migration policies and EU regulations with a collective voice, emphasizing solidarity and cultural coherence. The integration discourse of V4 reflects the constructivist perspective, particularly McCourt's argument that successful integration requires constructing shared identities through political narratives (McCourt, 2016).

Discourse analysis, drawn on Van Dijk (2003), further explains how political actors shape the narratives of integration in these regional alliances. On the one hand, the PA political discourse is

dominated by technical and economic rhetoric, which, while pragmatic, lacks the emotional and cultural resonance needed to stimulate public support. This highlights Van Dijk's assertion that discourse reproduces the dominant ideologies of political elites, often sidelining broader societal involvement. On the other hand, the V4's discourse effectively integrates cultural and historical elements, constructing a narrative that legitimizes its efforts to integrate, and relates with its populations. Fairclough's (2012) view that discourse constructs and legitimizes social realities is clear in the V4's ability to frame its integration as a return to historical regional cooperation.

Comparing PA and V4 within the framework of new regionalism and discourse analysis also gives insight into the impact of external influences. PA's focus on Asia-Pacific connectivity reflects its ambition to align with global economic trends, yet this interregional aspiration often exacerbates internal fragmentation, as member states struggle to reconcile national interests with regional goals. In contrast, V4's interaction with the EU exemplifies multiregionalism, where the group uses its regional identity to negotiate within a broader European framework. This dynamic aligns with Hettne's (2007) notion on how regionalism can serve as both a platform for local cohesion and a tool for global interconnection.

The challenges faced by these alliances accentuate the importance of balancing economic pragmatism with cultural and political cohesion. PA's struggles demonstrate that economic cooperation alone cannot sustain deep integration without a unifying discourse that fosters collective identity. Meanwhile, V4's success illustrates the power of cohesive narratives in overcoming regional disparities and external pressures. Both cases affirm the theoretical proposition that regionalism is not merely a product of economic necessity but also a construction of political and cultural discourses that define the shared values and objectives of member states.

The comparative analysis of PA and V4 reinforces the relevance of new regionalism and political discourse theories in understanding regional integration. V4's trajectory supports the argument that shared identity and multidimensional integration are key to successful regionalism, while PA highlights the limitations of an economic approach. These findings support the role of discourse in determining the paths of regional alliances, reflecting the broader relationship between power, identity, and integration in contemporary geopolitics.

As for the leadership strategies employed in the Pacific Alliance and the Visegrad Group the findings reveal contrasting approaches to fostering collective identity and political legitimacy, offering rich insights when analyzed through the lens of theoretical frameworks such as constructivism, new regionalism, and discourse theory.

Leaders in V4 employ symbolic actions and discursive strategies that resonate with the constructivist view articulated by McCourt (2016), which suggests that collective identity emerges from the framing of shared interests and common historical trajectories. For example, V4 leadership frequently emphasizes solidarity on issues such as migration policy and energy security, fostering a sense of unity among member states. This approach aligns with the theoretical proposition that the construction of a collective identity is crucial for sustaining regional integration. Additionally, V4 leaders strategically frame external challenges as opportunities to strengthen internal cohesion, thereby enhancing the bloc's political legitimacy.

In contrast, leaders in PA focus on advancing trade liberalization, economic connectivity, and Asia-Pacific relations, often framing the alliance as a modern, forward-looking integration project. While this strategy aligns with economic theories of regionalism, it diverges from constructivist insights that emphasize the role of shared cultural and political narratives in fostering collective identity.

From the perspective of discourse theory, the differences in leadership strategies between PA and V4 are evident. V4 leaders craft narratives that integrate cultural and political elements, leveraging discourse as a tool to legitimize their integration project. These narratives are inserted with ideological and symbolic meanings that reinforce a sense of belonging and mutual obligation among member states. In opposition, PA leaders employ a more technical and pragmatic discourse, which, while effective in addressing immediate economic goals, falls short of constructing a long-term, emotionally resonant regional identity.

6.4 Scientific Results of the Dissertation

The empirical findings of this study confirm the central assumptions of the theoretical framework combining new regionalism, constructivism, and political discourse analysis. The research demonstrates that regional integration processes are shaped not only by institutional arrangements or economic incentives but also by the strategic use of discourse, the distribution of power among actors, and the interaction between internal and external political dynamics.

The results therefore provide empirical confirmation of the formulated hypotheses and contribute to a deeper understanding of how regional alliances are constructed and maintained. Building on these findings, the scientific results of my dissertation are as follows:

1. First, the study confirms the hypothesis that political discourse within both alliances is predominantly shaped by power dynamics rather than by linguistic, cultural, or historical commonalities. I have proved that political leaders in the Pacific Alliance and the Visegrad Group strategically employ discourse to advance national interests and negotiate influence within the regional framework. This aligns with the discourse theory perspective that political narratives reproduce dominant ideological structures and power relations among elites (Fairclough, 1989). Although cultural and historical narratives are present, specifically in the discourse of the V4, they function primarily as political instruments rather than as the fundamental drivers of integration.

2. Second, in line with Wendt (1999) assumptions on international relations, which emphasize that regional integration evolves through complex political interactions rather than through purely economic mechanisms, this research demonstrates that political discourse functions simultaneously as a facilitator and a source of tension in regional integration processes. I have highlighted that discourse within both alliances creates opportunities for the development of shared norms, institutional cooperation, and common policy frameworks while also exposing differences in national priorities and policy preferences. This dual function confirms the hypothesis that discourse contributes more to enabling cooperation than to obstructing it.

3. Third, the study confirms that framing represents the primary discursive strategy used by political leaders in both alliances. Taking into account that political actors actively construct social and political realities through narrative framing (Schaffner, Brian & Sellers, 2010), I have

demonstrated that leaders in the Pacific Alliance and the Visegrad Group consistently frame political issues, external challenges, and policy objectives in ways that shape perceptions and legitimize their strategic choices. For example, V4 leaders frequently frame migration or energy security as shared regional challenges requiring collective responses, thereby reinforcing group solidarity. In contrast, leaders in the Pacific Alliance frame the organization as a forward-looking economic platform oriented toward global markets and Asia-Pacific cooperation.

4. Fourth, the results confirm the hypothesis concerning the role of citizens in shaping the collective identity and legitimacy of regional alliances. I have pointed out that public perceptions significantly influence the capacity of the Pacific Alliance and the Visegrad Group to consolidate common norms and values. In the case of the V4, the integration discourse frequently resonates with broader societal narratives about shared history and cultural identity, which strengthens the perceived legitimacy of the alliance. Conversely, the Pacific Alliance demonstrates weaker societal resonance because its discourse remains largely technocratic and economically oriented. This supports Debrix's (2015) constructivist arguments that collective identity is not merely institutional but socially constructed through interactions between political elites and broader publics.

5. Finally, the research confirms that communication patterns and discursive interactions within both alliances are strongly influenced by external actors. As Chilton (2004) notes, situating discourse within the global ideological arena reveals how the combination of literal content and metaphorical strategies produces a cognitive-linguistic complexity through which political actors construct a geopolitical map. I have highlighted a clear relationship between PA and V4 external geopolitical pressures and internal regional discourse, this exploration provides a useful lens for understanding the ways in which external contexts shape both alliances discursive practices.

In the case of the Visegrad Group, interaction with the European Union creates a multilevel discursive environment in which member states coordinate their positions collectively to influence broader European debates. In contrast, the Pacific Alliance's discourse reflects the strategic importance of relations with the United States and the Asia-Pacific region, shaping how member states communicate their economic priorities and external orientation.

In sum, the findings of this study indicate that understanding regional integration in the Pacific Alliance and the Visegrad Group requires more than just economic or institutional analysis. Rather,

integration results from the intricate interplay of political power, strategic narratives, collective identity formation, and external geopolitical pressures. Through the empirical validation of the research hypotheses, the study highlights political discourse as a key instrument for governance and as a means of establishing the legitimacy and internal cohesion of regional alliances in today's international arena.

6.5 Conclusions

This chapter explored the pivotal role of political discourse in determining regional integration efforts for the Pacific Alliance (PA) and the Visegrad Group (V4). By examining the economic, social, and geopolitical dynamics of these alliances through the lens of political discourse, the study highlights how narratives, framing strategies, and external influences define the successes and challenges of integration.

Political discourse in the PA and the V4 highlights their distinct priorities and challenges, with the PA centering on economic integration and the V4 emphasizing cultural and political unity. Both alliances use discourse to align member state policies and shape public opinion, but their success is influenced by historical legacies, external pressures, and the strategic approaches of their leaders. To remain effective, both alliances must bridge gaps in public engagement and adapt to the demands of an increasingly complex geopolitical environment, particularly in responding to global crises.

The comparative analysis of PA and V4 reveals explanatory insights into the dynamics of regional integration. First, the success of integration efforts is connected to balancing economic objectives with cultural and political narratives. While the PA demonstrates the limitations of a purely economic approach, the V4 features the power of identity-driven strategies in fostering cohesion and legitimacy. Second, effective leadership and communication strategies are essential in addressing public skepticism and aligning diverse interests. Third, external actors and global challenges must be carefully directed to maintain autonomy and coherence in regional initiatives.

Regional alliances like PA and V4 contribute significantly to global stability by fostering cooperation and addressing transnational challenges. However, their trajectories highlight the need for adaptability in the face of evolving global dynamics. As issues such as climate change,

migration, and digital transformation reshape the international arena, regional blocs must innovate their approaches to integration, emphasizing inclusivity, resilience, and sustainability.

Looking ahead, future research might explore the role of emerging powers, digital technologies, and public sentiment in influencing regional integration. Comparative studies of other alliances might enrich our understanding of the diverse pathways to regional cooperation.

Regarding the analysis limitations, the findings' focus on the period between 2019 and 2023 provides a timely snapshot of discourse and integration efforts, but it might lack the historical depth necessary to contextualize recent trends. For example, understanding how PA's economic focus has evolved since its foundation or how V4's cultural narratives have adapted to shifting EU dynamics would offer a more comprehensive picture.

Additionally, the findings could benefit from empirical support, such as more recent public opinion surveys, in-depth case studies, to substantiate claims about citizen perceptions and policy outcomes. The absence of such data limits the research's ability to fully capture the complexity of public involvement and its impact on integration efforts.

Despite these limitations, the findings offer practical implications for policymakers and regional leaders. They highlight the necessity of balancing economic objectives with cultural and political narratives to foster cohesion and public support. This lesson is particularly relevant as both alliances navigate global challenges such as migration, geopolitical tensions, and post-pandemic recovery.

In conclusion, the research findings provide a foundation for understanding the role of political discourse in regional integration, but they also expose gaps in depth, empirical grounding, and critical reflection. Addressing these limitations through more detailed exploration of public perceptions, leadership strategies, and internal dynamics would enhance the analysis and offer a more nuanced perspective on the complexities of regional cooperation.

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